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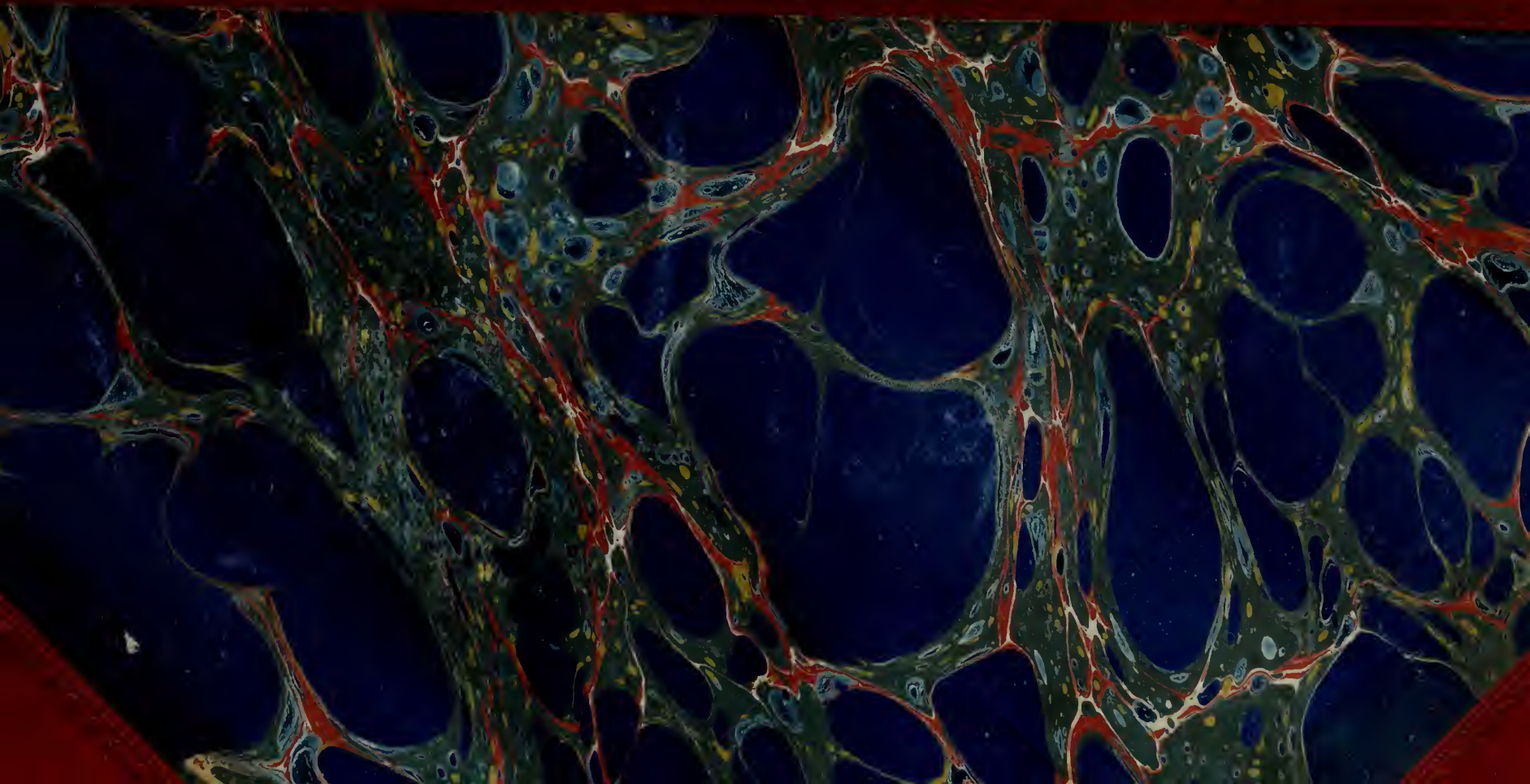

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W. SMALL
P. TAYLOR

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

CHARLES W. WOOD.

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THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

CHAPTER I.

THE FORGE.

IT was a May-day and the wind was not in the east. The little wind there was blew softly and gently from the south, and down in the valley the weather was warm and genial.

Some people might have found it too warm inside the smithy, at three o'clock in the afternoon, to be pleasant. Nevertheless, Reuben Foreman, as he stood at his anvil wielding mightily his heavy sledge with movement slow and rhythmical, was subject to several interruptions before the hooter of a neighbouring cloth mill announced that it was six o'clock and the day's work at an end.

And as not everyone in Woodford was either so busy or so industrious as the blacksmith, several of his visitors lingered to gossip as long as he bore with them, in spite of the heat. But Reuben took such contingencies into consideration, and in arranging his programme of work for the day, left a margin wide enough to cover all the horses he would be called upon to shoe, and the fools he would be in duty bound to converse with.

For the horses had hoofs to be shod, and the fools had souls to be saved; and Reuben, in his own opinion and in that of his neighbours, was clever in both these occupations, widely different as they were, though occasionally both were performed at the same moment.

As for instance, when Farmer Jobson's black mare had the shoe she had cast replaced on her near-fore, whilst the oaf that brought her "got religion" and went out from the forge a changed man, according to the blacksmith, though outwardly as great a dolt as ever.

Reuben's work, on this as on many occasions, was consummated on the following Sunday, when the dolt was baptised by immersion in the Baptist chapel of which the blacksmith was one of the pillars.

A pillar of strength physically no less than spiritually, was Reuben Foreman, a very giant of a man : tall and broad, his muscular arms as hard as his own anvil, his fist almost as heavy as his sledge-hammer, his sinews strong as cords, his flesh mostly gone to muscle, he would have been a brave man who wilfully offended Reuben Foreman, for one blow of that mighty fist would have sent most men over to the majority.

But it was not the blacksmith's strength only, though probably it was a considerable factor in the sum, that won him the respect and admiration he enjoyed in his native village and its neighbourhood. He was a handsome man, with blue eyes, and beard and hair still golden, though he was over fifty. Honest as the day, true as the steel that faced his anvil, sober, industrious, deeply religious, temperate in all things, he deserved the honour he received from men.

He was not perfect, for he was proud, and the pride was deep-seated, and he unconscious of its existence as he stood at his anvil that afternoon in May. But the angels, those winged messengers who bear divine messages from heaven to earth, were already on their way to raise the veil which hid him from himself. They would fain act gently, but their orders were stringent ; their work must be done, if not gently, then with violence.

The blacksmith's work was first interrupted that afternoon by the rector of the parish in which the blacksmith lived, who left his pony to be shod as he passed on his way to a School Board meeting, of which he was chairman.

He did not stay to gossip, for he and Reuben had little in common with each other, except pride, and that was not calculated to draw them together. The Rev. Ryot Tempest was a Conservative ; Reuben a red-hot Radical ; the rector, a beneficed clergyman of the established church, most orthodox in all his views, steering a middle course between High and Low, and avoiding the Broad section as he would avoid the plague. He looked upon Reuben as a heretic only a shade less black than the Roman Catholics, whose church and convent of enclosed nuns stood in the valley.

So his intercourse with him was of the briefest, and as forma as he could make it.

A striking contrast the two men made as the Rector dismounted and gave the necessary orders ; to which, by the way, Reuben paid no attention. He knew a great deal better than Mr. Ryot Tempest which shoes must be removed and which replaced, though he listened attentively. A very striking contrast, for Mr. Ryot Tempest (he was very particular about the Ryot) was remarkably small. Reuben could have lifted him with one hand as easily as he lifted his sledge. He was also remarkably plain. He was clean-shaven, and as bald as though he had been tonsured. His voice was high and squeaky, bu he spoke with pedantic precision, while the blacksmith rolled out his broad, uncultivated Westshire dialect in his deep bass. His linen

was spotless; his clothes were free from every speck of dust, and fitted his little body faultlessly; his hands, small and white as a lady's, were about half the size of the blacksmith's grimy paws.

"I shall be returning about five," smiled the Rector as he left the forge.

"Very good, sir," said Reuben, returning to his anvil after tying up the pony to wait his pleasure, whilst its little master skipped ightly up the village street to his meeting.

There are little men and little men in the world. Some of the best wares are packed in the smallest parcels; some of the largest hearts beat in little bodies, and some of the world's greatest men have been, and are, and no doubt will be, little men.

Even when this is the case there is something almost pathetic about a very small man. One feels sorry for him and inclined to think that St. Paul's assurance that he was "small" was sufficient to account for that "thorn in the flesh" about which theologians have made so many vain speculations.

But when a little man is swollen out with a sense of his own dignity and importance, the pathetic element in his composition becomes grotesque, our pity is touched with sarcasm, if not with scorn. And unfortunately for Mr. Ryot Tempest, he was so puffed up with the family pride of the Tempests, so inflated with the blue blood of the Ryots, that he was an object of amusement even to his friends; to his enemies a favourite butt for witticisms which, however weak, invariably hit the mark his little body offered.

Soon after Mr. Ryot Tempest's departure a boy brought a donkey, used to carry bread up the hills in panniers, for a new shoe, and Reuben attended to him at once, for he knew the boy's time was precious.

He further improved the occasion by inquiring into the spiritual state of his visitor; emphasising his remarks, and frightening the boy half out of his wits by pointing to his glowing furnace, which always served him as a faint illustration of a certain place to which, according to Reuben's creed, all the wicked must go, unless they repent and see the error of their ways.

A most essential part of Reuben's stock-in-trade was that furnace. Without it his occupation as a blacksmith would have failed; without it his sermons would have been tame, his exhortations probably fruitless.

His style as a preacher and teacher of men was realistic, and the urnace was more eloquent than words. He had but to point to the roaring bellows, the flaming forge, the glowing furnace, and to the dull imaginations of the local yokels, the stereotyped, colourless minds of the mill-hands, a vivid picture of the place of endless orment was conjured up.

Had Reuben been a grocer instead of a blacksmith, he would no doubt have weighed the good and the bad with his sugar and tea had he been an undertaker, the same tape would have served him

to measure the soul of the living and the body of the dead; a coffin would have furnished him with many a text; as a carpenter, scarcely one of his tools would have failed to point his discourse. But for his particular style of preaching no trade could have been so fruitful in providing him with metaphor as his own. In the awakening process which he deemed so necessary to the salvation of a soul, his flaming, fiery furnace was infinitely more valuable than scales or coffins, measuring tapes or carpenter's tools.

On the present occasion he certainly succeeded in opening the eyes and mouth of his young customer; but whether or no he reached the soul is another matter. At any rate he shod the donkey, and then vouchsafed to pay the same attention to the Rector's pony.

He had just finished this operation when he was accosted in these terms:

"Hulloa, Reuben! So you have my father's pony down here! Where has he gone, do you know?"

The speaker was a young man, rather under the average height, slight in figure, rather handsome in face, dark in complexion. His eyes were large and dark and dreamy; his hair, though closely cropped after the fashion of the day, waved and curled in spite of the scissors; his moustache was also curled at the ends; and the French blood that mingled with the pure Saxon of the Ryot Tempests manifested itself in a certain easy grace which just escaped the reproach of languor.

"As it happens, I do know, sir. He has gone to take the chair at a School Board meeting. My sister, Mrs. Canter, has been summoned again for not sending her children to school," said Reuben.

"I wish I had known sooner! I would give ten shillings to have been present. Norah Canter and my father together are as good as a play; she is the only person I ever met who can manage him. I'll back Norah to win, but I am sorry I missed the battle."

"It'll be almost the last she'll fight with Mr. Tempest, for she is leaving at Midsummer."

"So she tells me; I have promised to go and see her in her new home before I sail. But I must be off. Good evening, Reuben."

As he spoke, a bell from a cloth mill about half a mile off announced that it was half-past five, and that consequently the female hands employed there were at liberty to go. The bell interested Reuben, for his daughter worked there; but he little guessed it interested Mr. Reginald Tempest still more.

"The Rector is late; I count Norah has been too much for him," he muttered, as he resumed his hammer.

A few minutes later, a lanky, red-haired man of about five-and-thirty, who looked like a groom, but was, in point of fact, groom, gardener and coachman all in one, appeared, touched his hat respectfully to the father of the blacksmith's daughter, and said he had come to fetch his master's pony.

"Is the meeting over, then?" said Reuben.

"Yes; but master don't feel equal to a ride. I expect Mrs. Canter has been too much for him."

Reuben stifled a laugh, for his sympathies were with his sister; the groom's, as he knew, with his master.

"I have not seen you up at the chapel yet, Mark," said Reuben.

"No, Mr. Foreman," replied the groom, scratching his head; "you see it might cost me my place if master heard of it. Having married a Papist himself he is forced to be extra particular that none of his household don't go running after strange preachers. Not but what I believe that the truth lies with you, Mr. Foreman," continued Mark. "Only you know how I am situated. I have got a good place and a good master, good wages, and, though I say it that shouldn't, a good character; and a man who is thinking of marrying don't want to lose any of them."

"Better lose them all and save your soul, Mark," said Reuben, with a significant glance at the furnace.

"Better still to save my soul and keep them all; but I'll bear your words in mind, Mr. Foreman. I hope Miss Janet is pretty well?"

"Quite well, thank you," said Reuben shortly; adding to himself as the groom rode off: "And if it is my Janet you are after, you'll want a wife for many a long day, I can tell you."

Six o'clock! A fact duly announced by one or two mill-horns, several clocks, and by the angelus bell which rang out from the convent close by.

Reuben shook his head at this last sound and raked viciously at his fire, wishing he could burn the convent, if not the nuns, in its flames, before he proceeded to close his smithy for the night. Then he took a small Bible from his pocket and read as he walked slowly up the steep path which led to his cottage on the top of the opposite hill.

As he ascended, his thoughts rose heavenward. During the day they were apt to dwell on earthly things and the dark side of his religion; but when he had left his forge and the vivid picture of the place of punishment it suggested behind him, he turned to the bright side of his gospel. That heaven was his home, towards which he was surely travelling, certain of admittance, he had as little doubt as that the earthly home to which he was going was a heaven now open to receive him; and on this he would have wagered a week's earnings had he been a betting man. He would, therefore, not have been more surprised, if, on reaching the gate of heaven, St. Peter had declined or hesitated to open it than he was on reaching his cottage to find it was locked up. Janet had evidently not yet returned though Reuben was quite at a loss to account for her absence; it was so exceedingly unlike her to keep him waiting. As a rule his tea was always waiting his return, Janet at the door to receive him.

However, he supposed something unforeseen had detained her, and seating himself on the doorstep he lighted his pipe and awaited her appearance.

The long evening shadows were creeping over the fresh green fields on the opposite hill, on which a few houses were scattered wide apart. Low down the hill, on the other side of the valley, almost opposite Reuben's cottage, nestled the picturesque convent, a beautiful building but a thorn in the side of many besides Reuben. Down in the valley ran the river, which, every here and there, widened into mill-pools. By the side of the pools stood the mills, whose monotonous rows of windows added to the sleepy restfulness of the village. A peaceful scene, calm and beautiful, but Reuben was too much accustomed to it to be struck by its beauty. His attention was arrested by the figure of a man who suddenly appeared in a lane below where Reuben was sitting, vaulted over a low stone wall which enclosed the Rectory grounds and made straight across them for the house. The blacksmith was wondering who it could be, when another figure coming hastily up the steep hill-side turned the current of his thoughts.

This last was Janet, the object in which all Reuben's earthly love, and most of his pride, were centred. He might well be proud of her, for she was beautiful. Tall, like her father, with the same blue eyes and golden hair, worn in thick coils round her head, a complexion which suggested lilies and roses, she was indeed a fair woman, comely to look upon.

She had always been a thoughtful, reading girl, with singular quickness of apprehension, and her mind and education were far above her class. They had also taken great notice of her at the Rectory, and she had spent so many days with Miss Vera, partly as companion, partly as dependent, that she had unconsciously acquired a certain refinement of manner and bearing: a condition of things that was to bear fruit Mr. Ryot Tempest little dreamed of in the time to come. Her working at the mill was a matter of her own choice, and arose out of a certain pride and independence of character which was one of her most prominent traits: it never met with her father's cordial sanction. But Janet insisted upon earning something towards her own maintenance; and Reuben Foreman argued that with her good looks it would not be long before Janet was wooed and married, and comfortably established in a home of her own.

Though barely one-and-twenty, she already had many lovers; but hitherto she had shown no wish to leave her father's home, and dismissed all her admirers with strict impartiality; all excepting Mark Brown, and for him she showed positive aversion, as Reuben well knew. She was flushed and panting when she reached the cottage.

"Oh, father, I am so sorry. I did not know it was so late! How I must have dawdled."

"Never mind; you should not run up the hill. Where have you been?"

Janet hesitated. Perhaps the key was tiresome to fit in the lock she was unfastening, for her fingers trembled and her colour deepened as she answered:

"I met young Mr. Reginald, and he stopped to talk to me about Aunt Norah and the School Board meeting."

This was the truth, but it was not the whole truth. The whole truth Reuben did not learn for many a day.

"And then I met that horrid Mark Brown, and he stopped me."

"Not for long, I expect," said Reuben.

"Too long to please me," said Janet, as she prepared to make the tea, in which occupation she soon appeared to be absorbed. But in reality her thoughts were far away from such prosaic subjects as kettles which refuse to boil and bread which objects to be toasted. Her thoughts were centred in an earthly paradise, of which she was the queen, and a certain dark-eyed man, a few years older than herself, and in a different sphere of life, the king. But she was the reigning sovereign, for the king knelt at her feet.

A fool's paradise, no doubt, easily destroyed, but Janet is not the first person who has dwelt in so fragile a structure, and it is probable she will not be the last. Although so highly cultivated are we now-a-days that there seems a great risk that such old-fashioned flowers as love and romance will be rooted up and thrown away as weeds to make room for the more showy and less sweet plants of luxury and culture.

CHAPTER II.

MR. RYOT TEMPEST TAKES THE CHAIR.

Mr. Ryot Tempest was shy, therefore he disliked presiding at meetings; he was also proud and inconsistent, therefore he accepted the position when invited to do so. He disliked presiding and yet he liked to be in the chair. It was, in his opinion, a sort of tacit acknowledgment that he was superior to his neighbours, and, deeply impressed with this view himself, he liked others to acknowledge it.

Nevertheless, had he been aware that Mrs. Canter was to be brought before him on this occasion, he would have abdicated his position in favour of a brother clergyman. As it was he seriously contemplated feigning a sudden attack of illness before her case came on; he was such a martyr to dyspepsia that he could easily have done so without arousing suspicion. However, his valour got the better of his nervousness, and, having kept Mrs. Canter waiting till the rest of the business was concluded, he ordered her to be shown in.

He hoped by this delay to have tired her out and reduced her to comparative meekness, but in this he was mistaken. Mrs. Canter

was, no doubt, tired when at last her turn came, but there was very little meekness about her. Inwardly she was boiling with anger, outwardly she was calm and cool, as she boldly entered the class-room in which the meeting was held.

Mr. Ryot Tempest was supported on the right by a neighbouring squire; a jovial, easy-going man, fond of a joke; on the left by a maiden lady of uncertain age, with evangelical views and a very strict sense of propriety, touched with a secret admiration for her spiritual pastor. Two other gentlemen, and a widow in permanent weeds, made up the committee. They occupied one side of a long table. Mr. Ryot Tempest was the central figure, and, though mounted on a high chair, looked absurdly small when confronted by Mrs. Canter in cheap crape and widow's mourning, who, with a child on each side of her, advanced to the table and took up her position immediately facing the Rector.

She was an enormous woman of about five-and-forty, nearly six feet high and proportionately broad. She was as big for a woman as her brother Reuben was for a man; but, while he was muscular, she was fat; and her portly figure and imposing presence were sufficient of themselves to strike terror into the heart of a little nervous man like Mr. Ryot Tempest. When we add that the Rector was refined, sensitive and easily shocked, whilst Mrs. Canter would have been vulgar had her father been a duke, was aware of the Rector's tenderest places and certainly had no intention of sparing him, and had a sublime disregard for conventional propriety, the reader will not deny that Mr. Ryot Tempest had reason to feel uneasy.

Mrs. Canter did not even accord him his due prerogative of opening the battle, for, before he had time to speak, she attacked him.

"What do you mean by keeping me waiting here an hour-and-a-half on ironing-day, Mr. Tempest?"

Mrs. Canter always ignored the Rector's first name, though perfectly aware that few things annoyed him more.

"I was under the impression this was Thursday," said Mr. Ryot Tempest in a dignified tone, fidgeting nervously with the pen-tray in front of him.

"To be sure it is, sir; and Thursday is ironing-day; this boy of mine, half-witted as he is, knows that," said Mrs. Canter scornfully, pointing to a little boy just able to walk at her side, who seemed to be suffering from water on the brain.

"Indeed? Well, I am very sorry to see you before me again, Mrs. Canter——" began the Rector.

"Sorry! Then why did you send for me, sir? You can't be half so sorry to see me as I am to come, with two dozen shirts waiting to be ironed at home; eight or nine of them yours, too, Mr. Tempest."

Mr. Tempest grew very red, upset the pen-tray, and coughed nervously at this allusion to his linen, whilst the maiden lady on his left blushed crimson.

"I sent for you, as you express it, though hardly correctly, because you are summoned by the School Board for not sending your daughter Mary Jane Canter to school on four consecutive Mondays; the charge is, I believe, correct?"

"Quite, sir; and I never intend to send her on any Monday, consecutive or not. Mary Jane never has been to school on a Monday, and so long as I live Mary Jane never will go to school on a Monday." And Mrs. Canter looked sternly over her mountainous expanse of chest at her diminutive judge as she delivered her soul of this sentiment.

"May I ask why?"

"Monday is washing-day, Mr. Tempest," said Mrs. Canter, as solemnly as if she were announcing the Day of Judgment.

"Oh! ah! humph! I really don't see the connection. Would you kindly explain to the Board why that interesting fact should interfere with your daughter's education?" demanded Mr. Ryot Tempest, in the precise, measured tones in which he always spoke.

"I should have thought their own common sense might have told them that, without my explaining. Now I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, do you think it possible for me or any woman to stand at a wash-tub from four in the morning till nine at night, to get breakfast, dinner and tea for six children and myself; to dress and take the little ones to school; and to mind and nurse an unweaned infant, without any help? Could any of you do it? Could you do it yourself, Mr. Tempest?"

No one responded to this challenge. The jovial squire and the widow could with difficulty restrain their laughter, the maiden lady was shocked. Mr. Ryot Tempest, aware of his inability to fulfil these various duties, was at a loss for a reply, so Mrs. Canter continued:

"You know there isn't one of you at that table that could do it; no human being could; and I am not an angel," she somewhat superfluously added.

"You are not, indeed; and no one expects you to do impossibilities; but I still fail to see what all this has to do with your keeping Mary Jane from school," said the Rector.

"Why, sir, I keep her to wash and dress the children, to get the meals ready, and to mind the baby."

"I see. But unfortunately for you, Mrs. Canter, the Government insists upon your sending your children to school; it does not take all these domestic obstacles into consideration."

"Then the Government is a fool!" exclaimed Mrs. Canter; which so amused the squire that he made no attempt to conceal his laughter, whilst Mr. Ryot Tempest dare not venture to contradict this opinion, so unflattering to the legislature of his country.

"Let me see: Mary Jane is twelve years old, isn't she?" said the Rector, referring to his papers.

"Now, Mr. Tempest, you know Mary Jane's age as well as you know your own! Isn't it thirteen years this very month since you accepted this living, because it was near the Catholic church for Madame to go to? And didn't I leave your service the following May, to marry poor Canter? And isn't Mary Jane my eldest child? How should she possibly be more than eleven? Just tell me that, if you please, sir."

But Mr. Ryot Tempest did not care to enter into any such biological possibilities. He preferred to own he had made a mistake in Mary Jane's age, whilst he inwardly racked his brains to think of some way of getting rid of this terrible woman, who, in her last speech, had touched two of his tenderest points. She had alluded to his wife's religion, and, indirectly, to her nationality, with the sole object of annoying him, as he very well knew.

"True; I see I have made a mistake; she is only eleven. I fear I must fine you again, Mrs. Canter. Ladies and gentlemen, you have heard Mrs. Canter's defence. Do you think these domestic arrangements justify her in keeping her child from school?"

"Now, Mr. Tempest, what should these four gentlemen, and these ladies, one who has never been married, and one a childless widow, know about a mother's duties? No more than I know of foreign tongues! Not so much; for I learnt a little French when I nursed your children, God bless them both. You can judge far better than any of them, Mr. Tempest, for you can keep house as well as any lady, and always did in my time."

This was true; but it was not a fact Mr. Ryot Tempest cared to have published. However, he did not show any irritation; he only resolved to get the enemy out of the room as quickly as possible.

"Well, there is no need, I think, to discuss the matter further. I must fine you half-a-crown for each offence; that is ten shillings. Are you prepared to pay it?"

"Ten shillings! A fine imposition it is, too, I will say, sir. Yes, I'll pay it and have done with it; but I shall charge double price for every article I wash for every member of this Board until I see this ten shillings back again, so I give you all fair warning, ladies and gentlemen. Double price for everything: shirts, collars, pocket-handkerchiefs, night-dresses, petti——"

"Quite so, quite so, Mrs. Canter! We all understand, and under the circumstances, we all consent to the arrangement. Good-day," said the chairman, anxious to shorten the list Mrs. Canter would fain have run through as she paid her fine.

"Before I go, sir, I should just like to tell the committee I am leaving this neighbourhood at Midsummer; and I am glad to say where I am going there is no Board School; the clergy knows better than to have one. Good-day, ladies and gentlemen."

And with this parting thrust, Mrs. Canter took her portly self and her children out of the room.

You may refine sugar, you may refine gold and silver, but there are some people it is impossible to refine. Mrs. Canter was one of them. The ten years she had lived as nurse in the Rector's family had failed to refine her; the pains and troubles of motherhood, the loss of two children and the recent loss of her husband had all been equally powerless. The fire of affliction had no more effect on her than physical suffering; the pangs of maternity availed no more than the intercourse with the cultivated minds with which her position as nurse had brought her in contact. She was like a noisy, rushing river that no bounds can restrain, no science control, no act subdue; she would run her course regardless of bounds, of science and of art.

Her faults, however, were on the surface. A kinder heart than Norah Canter's never beat; she had been invaluable as a nurse to Mrs. Ryot Tempest, and it was doubtful if any of her own children were as dear to her as the Rector's son and daughter. Indeed, Norah would have confessed, if pressed, that Reginald Tempest still held the first place in her affections. If she sometimes erred on the side of severity with her own children, particularly since their father's death, to the little Tempests she had ever been most indulgent; and Mr. Ryot Tempest did not exaggerate when he maintained, as he often did, that she had utterly spoilt them both. Many had been the battles fought between father and nurse on this point in days of yore; equally numerous the victories Norah won.

It was with a sense of defeat similar to that he had frequently experienced when Norah reigned supreme over his nursery that Mr. Ryot Tempest now slowly and somewhat sadly wended his way home, his nerves too much shattered, after his encounter with Mrs. Canter, to continue his ride.

On reaching home, he went straight to his study, in which room he spent most of his time; though what he studied was a matter of wonder to his friends, unless it was Lemprière's Classical Dictionary and the Peerage, in both of which works he was qualified to pass a strict examination. For Mr. Ryot Tempest was nothing if not classical, and no one believed he obtained his classical knowledge direct from Homer and Virgil. As for the Peerage, to hear him talk, you would imagine every peer who was not connected with the Tempests was related to the Ryots.

On the present occasion he did not feel equal to study of any kind, but sat down in an easy-chair to try and smooth his ruffled plumes after his encounter with this modern Xantippe, as he loved to call Mrs. Canter.

He had not been in the house ten minutes before a servant entered to say a French nun wished to see him. Few interruptions would have been more irritating to Mr. Ryot Tempest's already disturbed nervous system. Anything which reminded him of his wife's religion and nationality was peculiarly distasteful to him. At

the same time he was very curious ; and his curiosity to know what this nun's business could be with his wife—for he didn't for a moment suppose she had asked for him—caused him to admit her into his sanctum.

A slight figure, rather over the average height, and clad in the white serge habit of a Dominican nun, now entered the room, and addressed him in fluent French. The voice seemed familiar to him ; but he did not recognise the face, which, indeed, was partly hidden by a pair of large blue spectacles, and a hood and veil.

Mr. Ryot Tempest prided himself on his French, bad as it was, so he was pleased to enter into a short conversation with his visitor, who informed him she came from a convent at Avranches, and, knowing that Madame was a Catholic, and frequently visited Avranches during the summer, she had called to ask for a subscription to the new chapel they were building. The interview ended in Mr. Ryot Tempest giving the nun a sovereign ; and, thanking him profusely, she departed.

Shortly after, Mr. Ryot Tempest heard shouts of laughter in the room overhead, and, guessing he had been made the victim of an exceedingly ill-timed joke, he went upstairs to see if the suspicion that had just dawned upon him were correct.

The room he now entered was his wife's sitting-room, in which she usually sat. It commanded a beautiful view of the valley, similar to that obtained from Reuben Foreman's cottage. In the window stood a large embroidery-frame, and, as Mrs. Tempest sat at her work, she could gaze on the convent, in the chapel of which she heard mass almost every day of her life.

Just now she was not looking either at the convent or the altar-cloth she was embroidering, but at her daughter, who, disguised as a Dominican nun, was sitting in a rocking-chair, laughing as if life were one long joke, and no such thing as care or trouble ever darkened it. Peal after peal of joyous laughter, as silvery as it was genuine, the girl sent forth as her father opened the door. She had taken off the glasses and her hood and veil, but she still had on the white flannel habit, scapular and leather girdle. Her hair had come down, and was hanging in rippling masses of tawny gold over her shoulders ; her great, dark eyes sparkled with fun and merriment ; her gleaming, pearly-white teeth, her dimpled cheeks, all told how intensely the girl was enjoying her joke ; whilst the heavy habit, meant to conceal rather than to reveal the wearer's form, could not altogether hide the grace and beauty of that almost perfect girlish figure.

"Vera ! Vera ! this is not right," said the gentle mother ; but if the words were reproving, the look which accompanied them was a mixture of maternal pride, love and admiration.

"What is all this noise about ? Vera, leave the room directly, and take off that dress. I wonder your mother should allow you

to disguise yourself as a nun. I consider it verging on irreverence; and your hair looks positively indecent at this hour of the day."

"It came down. I could not cut it off as the nuns do, even to take you in, papa," said Vera, beating a hasty retreat as she shook back her beautiful locks; the last words were said in an undertone, and did not reach Mr. Tempest's ears.

"It is too bad, Natalie, when I come home worried to death with parochial business, of which you understand nothing, to find the house like a bear-garden and Vera tearing about more like an actress than a clergyman's daughter. She ought to be visiting in the parish instead of wasting her time in this way."

"No one is ill that I know of, and she is going to see Norah before dinner. Norah has been out all the afternoon," said Mrs. Tempest with her pretty foreign accent.

"Out, indeed! She had to appear before the School Board, and was as insolent as ever. Tell Vera I forbid her to go near that Xantippe of a woman to-day," said Mr. Tempest fractiously, as he left the room.

A fractious child is a troublesome thing to deal with, but a fractious man is far worse. You can punish the child, but the only thing you can do to the man is to humour him, unless you can marry him to a contentious woman and let them fight it out. Fortunately a fractious man is a somewhat rare phenomenon. Men as a rule are happier than women, and the fractious are the exceptions.

Mrs. Tempest bore all her husband's moods with the sweetness of a saint. She accepted that trial, and every other trouble which came to her as penance for her sins. Not so her daughter. Vera was apt to rebel against her father's strictness with all the strength of a wilful, untamed nature. Vera loved her mother passionately, but there was no question of obedience or submission between them; the submission was all on the mother's side. But that beautiful love which so often exists between father and daughter was altogether wanting with Vera and Mr. Ryot Tempest. Hers was a wild, wilful, passionate nature, craving for love and sympathy. Full of generous impulses, but at present undirected, unsubdued, she possessed the material of a fine character, if only the circumstances of her life could mould it into a perfect form. Her father was cold and somewhat selfish, utterly devoid of sympathy, but nevertheless very just, precise and particular in all his dealings; shy and nervous and yet very proud. The two natures jarred like discordant notes whenever they came in contact.

But perhaps the real barrier between them was, that Vera secretly despised her father, and he knew it. She didn't believe in his pretended learning; she laughed at the Tempests and made game of the Ryots; and she inwardly raged against the quietness and dulness of her home. For the Tempests went nowhere. Mr. Ryot Tempest

did not care for society himself, and his wife had little in common with the surrounding Protestants, many of whom looked upon her as a heretic. So she had meekly acquiesced when she found her married life was to be almost as secluded as that of the convent in which she was educated.

Now that Vera was grown up and panted after the world and its pleasures as eagerly as a young race-horse longs for the signal which is to start him on the race, Mrs. Tempest regretted that she had submitted so entirely to her husband's wishes in this matter; regretted it for her children's sake; for Vera's especially; not for her own. For herself she had no wish to go into society. She looked upon the world, of which she was as ignorant as her daughter, as the spot in the battle-field of life in which the battle raged fiercest, where the enemy pressed hardest, where the slaughter was greatest; and she had no desire to enter the front ranks of the fighting army, scarcely one soldier of which could hope to escape unwounded.

Soon after Mr. Ryot Tempest left the room, Vera returned. She had changed her dress and coiled up her pretty hair. Her slight, graceful figure was seen to perfection in the well-cut cloth dress she wore, and the large crimson Gainsborough hat and ostrich feather became her exceedingly. There was something very foreign-looking about her. She had none of the pink-and-white beauty of English girls. Her skin was spotless, but it was of a pale olive tint; her features were delicately cut and very mobile; whilst the striking contrast of her fair hair and dark, lustrous eyes, with their long black lashes, made her face very remarkable, and her utter freedom from self-conscious vanity was very attractive.

"What a fright I looked, mamma, didn't I? If you had only lent me a rosary to hang at my side, I should have taken in even the good nuns opposite. I wish Norah could have seen me! I must go and tell her how splendidly I took papa in. So good-bye for the present."

"Stay, Vera. Your father does not wish you to go to Norah to-day; she has offended him," said Mrs. Tempest in French, for she rarely spoke English to Vera.

"But that is all the more reason why I should go, mother. I want to hear all about it," said Vera.

"Send Reggie, and stay with me. You must not disobey your father. And perhaps, if you are very good, I will tell you how I came to possess that Dominican habit. By-the-bye, what have you done with it?"

"Put it carefully away in my wardrobe. If ever I want to run away it will be a famous disguise, since not even my own father recognised me."

"Vera, Vera! you terrify me. Why are you so wild? You grow more like my poor sister Véronique every day."

"I was only joking, little mother. You need not fear. There is no one for me to run away with. I wish with all my heart there were; it is all so dull and triste here I sometimes think I shall die of ennui. I would give anything to live, instead of existing as I do, and as the cows and the pony, and the cats and the dogs do. Mamma, did you never long for life, for real life? Did you never long to love and to suffer, to enjoy and to really exist?"

Mrs. Tempest sighed and drew the graceful, girlish figure to her, till Vera half-sat, half-lay at her mother's feet, and rested her head on her knees, while Mrs. Tempest ran her beautiful white fingers through the golden, tawny hair. There was a strong likeness between the two, though their expressions differed so much that the likeness was not striking on a brief acquaintance. The same mould might have served Dame Nature in which to cast the features of both; but Mrs. Tempest's hair was much darker, had always been much darker, than Vera's, and her eyes were softer and less brilliant; so the contrast between fair hair and dark eyes, so remarkable in Vera, was not one of Mrs. Tempest's charms.

The difference between the faces, however, lay deeper than mere difference of form or colour. The difference was that of two souls. One calm, peaceful, resigned, chastened by the discipline of life, though that timid, gentle soul had needed no severe chastisement. The other restless, wilful, passionate, undisciplined, thirsting for the happiness it felt it had the power to enjoy, yet brave to endure the suffering it might have to bear on its journey through life.

Brave? Nay, rather bold. For he is bold who, at the beginning of life, dares to say he is strong enough to weather the storms he may encounter during the voyage before he gets safe into port. And Vera, dimly suspecting that great joy and great sorrow are so intimately connected with each other that we can rarely entertain one without being favoured with a visit from the other, felt the craving for happiness so strong in her, that she boldly wished for both rather than make the acquaintance of neither.

Mrs. Tempest, whose gentle, saintly nature had never experienced such a passionate longing for happiness, trembled for Vera when she heard her give vent to these wild wishes. And on this occasion she resolved to tell her the history of her Aunt Véronique, of whom Vera often reminded her.

Natalie Tempest, *née* de Carteret, and her sister, Véronique, were educated in a Dominican convent in Normandy. Their own home was in the Auvergne, and, owing to the distance, they seldom went home for their holidays, but spent them with an uncle who lived at Caen, where he practised as a physician. He had married an English lady, and it was here Natalie first met Mr. Ryot Tempest, a cousin of her aunt's. He fell violently in love with the pretty, gentle French girl, and after a great deal of difficulty, the opposition of the parents on both sides was overcome, a dispensation was obtained, and Natalie,

whom the good nuns had always thought would have become one of their body, became the wife of an English clergyman.

Véronique was two years younger than Natalie, and she had certainly never shown any signs of a vocation for the religious life. A coquette from the cradle, wilful, passionate, beautiful, the plague and yet the pet of the convent, it would have been a miracle of grace indeed, said the nuns, if Véronique ever wore a habit.

And yet the day came when Véronique did wear a habit—for a day—and the miracle, if there was one, was how she obtained it; but that was never known. In it she escaped from the convent, and eloped with a young English officer whom she met at her uncle's house. They were married in England and sailed for India the following week. It was not a happy marriage, and five years afterwards Véronique died of fever, and, if her sad letters to her sister were to be believed, of a broken heart. On her death, her trinkets and other possessions, among them the habit, were sent to Mrs. Tempest, who had never parted with them. Perhaps, had she known the part that unlucky habit was to play in her daughter's life, she would have burnt it.

This was the story Mrs. Tempest now told Vera.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. CANTER AT HOME.

It was washing-day, and no one who knew Mrs. Canter would have ventured to call it anything else in her presence. No doubt the generality of people preferred to call it Monday, but then in Mrs. Canter's opinion the generality of people were fools. On washing-day Mrs. Canter, always big, was bigger than ever. Perhaps the importance of the work on which she was engaged from four in the morning till nine at night added to her stature. But so did the pattens on which on these occasions she was mounted; and so did the large poke bonnet perched crown-uppermost on the top of her head. Her somewhat voluminous skirt was pinned up under a huge apron, and her sleeves with great difficulty rolled up over her enormous arms to her shoulders, a feat never performed but once in the twenty-four hours. Thus vested Mrs. Canter took up her position at the wash-tub three or four hours before less industrious people had left their beds, and with brief intervals for food and for the correction of any unruly member of her family, there she remained revelling in soap-suds, redolent of soda, enveloped in a cloud of steam from the boiler, through which she loomed huge and mysterious, her arms steeped in water, her fingers crimped and crinkled, till the kitchen-clock struck nine.

The scene of Mrs. Canter's labours was the wash-house, into which sacred temple, the holy of holies of the Canter household, no little

Canter ever dared to penetrate on washing-day, the greatest feast in Mrs. Canter's calendar. Here, surrounded by huge tubs containing linen in various stages of "first soak" and "second soak," of washing and rinsing and blueing, Mrs. Canter presided, moving from tub to tub as the ritual of her sacred occupation demanded; her attention occasionally diverted to the copper, from which the steam rose like the smoke of incense as she raised the lid and stirred its contents with all the solemnity due to so solemn a function.

The inhabitants of Woodford were as brave as most country people, yet there were only two people in the village who would have ventured to interrupt Mrs. Canter on washing-day. Those two were Vera Tempest and her brother Rex; and they had no scruples. On the contrary, they considered it rather a good opportunity to get Norah to herself; for on washing-day they no more feared interruption than a courtier summoned to a private audience with his sovereign.

Therefore, when Mary Jane tapped at the wash-house door on the last washing-day Mrs. Canter proposed spending in Woodford, and intimated that Mr. Rex desired an audience, Norah was neither surprised nor displeased.

"Come in, Mr. Rex, come in; and Mary Jane, hand in a chair," exclaimed Norah.

"You are a little damp in here, Norah," said Rex, bringing himself and a chair into the steaming atmosphere of the laundry.

"I have just been stirring up the copper; it'll be better in a minute, sir."

"Oh, I don't mind; it will hide my blushes. I have a secret to tell you to-day, Norah. You don't mind my smoke, I know; it will counteract the effect of your steam, perhaps," said Rex, seating himself astride the chair in the middle of the wash-house and lighting a cigar.

"I hope you are not in another scrape, Master Rex," said Norah, giving the linen in soak two or three vigorous shakes.

"No, but I want you to help me all the same," said Rex, puffing away. And then after a pause, during which Norah moved to the washing-tub proper and soaped away at some linen, he added: "The truth is I am in love."

"Why, bless the boy, you don't say so! You were in the nursery only the other day as it seems to me," said Norah from her soap-suds.

"I do say so; and, what is more, I mean it."

"Then, Master Rex, all I can say is, it is the worst scrape you ever were in in your life. For, if the lady was an angel from heaven, Mr. Tempest would not hear of your marrying till you have enough to keep a wife; and I don't see how you are to manage that for several years to come," said Norah, rubbing and scrubbing at some garment with unnecessary energy, as Rex thought.

"She isn't an angel, certainly; and my father would say as certainly she isn't a lady."

"Not a lady! Then, Master Rex, I wash my hands of it," said

Norah, suiting the action to the word, as she wiped the soap-suds off her hands, and with arms a-kimbo, actually paused from her solemn rites to gaze at Rex, the motherly instinct in her getting the better of the laundress. "I'll have nothing to do with it," she added.

"Yes, you will, Norah. You will do all I want you to do. You never denied me anything yet, and you are not going to begin that game when the happiness of my life and of someone else's too depends on your help," said Rex, very quietly but very decidedly.

Norah knew from experience that when Rex spoke in that tone no amount of persuasion or argument would turn him from his purpose. She knew it would end in her doing his bidding, though she had at present no idea what that bidding was. But she determined not to yield without a struggle.

"I wish with all my heart I had denied you more when you were a child; you would have been a much better man if I had. And, look you here, Master Rex; a girl who isn't a lady will no more satisfy you six months after you are married than any other laundress but me will satisfy my customers."

"I'll risk that. Listen, Norah," said Rex, throwing down his cigar and rising to his feet, but still speaking in the tone Norah feared to hear: "I am in love as I told you, and the girl is not what gentlefolk call a lady; but I am going to marry her the week after next, and I shall marry her from your cottage."

"Do you mean from here, sir?" said Norah, seizing upon the details before she attempted to deal with the main fact of this bewildering statement.

"No; I mean from your new home. You move next Saturday, don't you? Well, the following Saturday my bride will arrive to stay with you. You will bring her up to London, and I shall marry her on Monday morning and take her over to France for a week. I can't spare longer because I sail this day month. I go to London to-morrow to get my outfit and the license, and to make all the necessary arrangements. Do go on washing, Norah, instead of staring at me," said Rex irritably, for Norah's attitude was so abnormal a one for washing-day that he half feared her mental attitude might also be unusual: in which case he would not be able to wring the consent he counted on from her.

"Washing is one thing, Mr. Rex, and a very serious thing, too, when you look at it in a proper light, and think of all the responsibility it lays upon you. But marrying is another matter, and a deal more serious. I should not do myself any credit with that linen till I hear a little more about this business. Who is the girl, sir? An artful, good-for-nothing minx, I'll be bound."

"Take care, Norah. The girl is your niece, Janet Foreman; and if you'll be kind enough to show me a more beautiful, or a better, or a sweeter woman, I'll marry her and forsake Janet, though it would break her heart."

Norah did not speak. She turned round to her wash-tub, but instead of resuming her washing, she threw her apron over her head and burst into tears. This action was as unexpected by Rex as it was unwelcome to him, though he interpreted it to mean that his request would ultimately be granted. But such success was not an unqualified joy. It was accompanied with embarrassment, for Rex did not know what to do. He could neither put his arm round Norah's very extensive waist nor seize one of her half-dry hands, and no other method of comforting a weeping woman suggested itself to his young mind. Yes, it was decidedly embarrassing. It was annoying, too, for it delayed matters. It was also unpleasant, for it made him feel he was a brute to grieve his old nurse in this way.

Norah's grief, however, was short, if somewhat violent; a heavy shower, after which signs of clearing appeared. Life was not long enough in her opinion to indulge in sorrow except in the interludes between washing and rinsing, starching and ironing. It was only in such spare moments that she allowed her genuine sorrow for the lamented Canter to have free course. This new trouble had surprised her into tears, for it came upon her so suddenly, and she had not the slightest suspicion that any feeling of affection existed between Rex and Janet Foreman. That Rex admired Janet she knew, for it was impossible for any man, young or old, gentle or simple, to be blind to her beauty; but the young people had arranged their stolen meetings so cleverly that no news of them had reached Norah's ears.

After this outburst, Mrs. Canter dried her eyes on her apron; and, allowing the laundress element in her composition, which had been held in abeyance by the communication Rex had just made, to resume its sway, she plunged her arms elbow-deep into the soapsuds before her, exclaiming as she did so:

"Drat the clothes!"

"Drat" is a word hardly to be considered elegant English. If Mr. Ryot Tempest had heard it the shock to his nervous system and his classical taste would have been so great that he would probably have been seized with a fit. But his son cared not a rush for the purity of the English language, and he justly considered the expression as a sign that his appeal for help was successful.

It was so. When Norah said "drat the clothes," she intended to convey the righteous indignation she felt, not only because such prosaic considerations as dirty linen should thus interrupt a conversation on so romantic a topic as a clandestine marriage, but also because the laws of society were allowed to cut so sharply and so inexorably across the romance of life.

Rex, who, during Mrs. Canter's tears, had been whistling softly, burst out laughing when she thus delivered herself.

"There is a deal more reason for crying than for laughing,

Master Rex. You are going to do wrong, and I suppose I shall have to help you, more shame for me. Though where the sin lies, for the life of me I can't see," said Mrs. Canter, leaving the soap-suds for the blueing-tub, from which new position, facing Rex, she proceeded to wring out the contents as she spoke.

Wringing is an art, which, like many other arts, appears extremely easy until you try it, and Rex, as he watched the ease with which she wrung the blue-water out of the heavy linen, was not aware how many weaker wrists than Norah's would have been sprained with such labour.

"Of course you can't see it, Norah. There is no sin in it; it is only a breach of conventional humbug," said Rex. "Janet will make me a far better wife than a fine lady would; the life in Manitoba is a hard one. What use would a lady be to me out there? I want someone who can rough it a little. I shall probably settle there for years, if not for life. Fortunes are not made by farming in a day; and I don't suppose anyone out there is likely to ask who Janet's father is. She is quite as well educated as any women we are likely to meet, and I can teach her still more during the winter."

"All that is very true, sir, and as for a better or a more innocent-minded girl than Janet, you might go half the world over and not find her, not to mention her good looks. And handsome she is, if ever there was a handsome woman. But still, Master Rex, we are going to do wrong, and you may depend upon it we shall both suffer for it sooner or later."

"Let us hope it will be later, then," said Rex, with that disregard of consequences common to young people when their present happiness is at stake.

"I don't mean to take Janet out till I have got a home for her," he continued; "and that won't be for a year to come, at the earliest. Then I shall write to my father and Reuben, and send the money for her outfit and passage. Till then Janet can live with her father, whom she is very loth to leave, and no one but you and Janet and I will be any the wiser."

Mrs. Canter paused in her occupation of wringing out a sheet to gaze in amazement at her visitor, on hearing this plan; for she saw a grave objection to it, and one she had a difficulty in suggesting to Rex, since it apparently had not occurred to him.

"Do you mean Reuben is not to know she is married till you send for her?" she asked.

"Yes. If Reuben knew it, he would tell my father, and think he was doing his duty; and if it reached my father's ears, he would stop the supplies, and I must have capital. He has promised me five hundred pounds now, and another five hundred pounds this time next year; till I get the second sum my marriage must be kept a secret."

"I understand, Master Rex; but you see, sir, when people are

married, they can't expect there will never be anyone else but themselves to think of," said Mrs. Canter significantly.

"I know what you mean, Norah; if that happens before I send for Janet, you must have her to stay with you, and look after her. I'll pay you well, though I know you won't think of that."

"Mr. Rex, you know I would do anything in the world for you and Miss Vera. You know, too, when I make a promise I keep it. I promise you I'll do my best to keep your secret. I'll look after Janet when you are gone. But, mark my words, sir, there is trouble in store for us. However, there is no need to forbode sorrow. The first thing I shall have to do is, to persuade Reuben to let Janet come to me for Whitsuntide; and I'll set about that to-morrow, please God, though I fear it won't please Him at all."

"Norah, you are a darling. My own mother would not do more for me, and could not do as much. Dear little mother, I wish I could tell her. I never deceived her in my life, or had a secret from her before; but I dare not tell her this; she would fret herself into her grave between her love for me and her loyalty to my father."

"Dear no, sir, don't tell Madame, whatever you do; an angel like her don't want to be mixed up in such a business as this. Miss Vera, now, would delight in it; but I should not tell her till you are forced, and then Mr. Tempest can't blame her. She may have troubles enough of her own some day. So let no one know it but you and me; my back is broad. By the way, Master Rex, before you go I want to tell you a secret about Miss Vera."

"About Vera? the child has not got a lover, too, has she?" said Rex.

"Not one she would deign to look at, anyhow, bless her pretty face. No, it is nothing to do with lovers," said Norah, who, having finished wringing, proceeded to make the grand tour of her tubs; removing the contents of each to the succeeding tub till each tubful had gone up a stage in the process of washing; the tub designated "first soak" alone remaining empty.

Just then a timid tap was heard at the wash-house door, and Norah, wondering which of her children had dared to interrupt her in the performance of the solemn rites she was engaged in, advanced with befitting dignity, and threw open the door with the air of a queen. A peal of silvery laughter, echoed by the little Canters, greeted her, and Vera, in her pale grey cloth dress and crimson hat, stood before her, laughing and beautiful.

"We were just talking of you. Why did you interrupt us, Vera?" said Rex.

"Because you *were* talking of me. Talk of the angels, etc.," laughed Vera.

"And the other things appear," returned Rex.

"It is lucky for you my temper is, to-day at least, angelic, Rex. I am wild with excitement, Norah. I have come to tell you the news

Mr. Ryot Tempest, accompanied by his admiring wife and much admired—ahem !—daughter, is about to proceed to Avranches next month ; and contrary to his usual custom on similar occasions, will stay at the hotel instead of taking a furnished house. The vista of lovely possibilities this charming prospect offers, only a rich imagination like my own could suggest ; I may meet my fate there. Who knows ? "

" I pity the fate," said Rex, with fraternal frankness.

" Good-bye, Norah. I'll come in again on my way home ; for what with your steam and Rex's flattery and smoke, I feel suffocated. My fate shall abandon smoking when he meets me, if it is one of his vices."

The laundry-door closed upon this speech, and after she had showered comfits on the little Canters amidst shouts of laughter, a sudden lull told that Vera had departed.

" Bless her pretty face ! Now, Master Rex, what I want to tell you is this—though as you are going away almost as soon as I am, I don't know that it is much good ; but it troubles me, so I must tell someone. *Miss Vera sometimes walks in her sleep.* As a child she frequently did, but she has never done it since we came here, so far as I know ; and now that I am going away I feel as if someone ought to be told."

" Don't my parents know, then ? "

" No. Poor Madame would never sleep a wink in peace if she knew it ; and as for Mr. Tempest he is fussy enough now, and keeps the poor child shut up like a nun ; if he knew that, I don't know what steps he would not take to prevent an accident—put her into a strait-waistcoat, perhaps. So I never told either of them. And if I had not been going away from Woodford I should not have mentioned it to you. So long as the child is well and happy there is no fear of her doing it ; but if any trouble came to her she might do it again though she appears to have outgrown it. What do you think, Master Rex : shall I mention it to anyone before I go ? "

" No," said Rex, who was thinking more of his own affairs than of Vera. " If she has not done it for all these years, I should not think there is any danger."

Norah was rather doubtful about the wisdom of this advice. But she was one of those people who seldom ask advice, and never act upon it even when they do, unless it coincides with their own preconceived notions, as was the case in the present instance ; for, except Mr. Ryot Tempest himself, she knew no one to whom she could confide the secret of Vera's somnambulism. So she left Woodford without saying anything more about it, little thinking what vital consequences her silence entailed upon more than one person connected with this history.

(*To be continued.*)

GUSTAVO BECQUER.

By Miss Betham-Edwards.

NO more pathetic figure stands out in contemporary literature than that of the brilliant young Spaniard, romancer, poet, critic, Gustavo Becquer, cut off just twenty years ago in the flower of manhood. Yet a little more of life and health and, without doubt, fame and fortune would have smiled upon him. The door of death opened just as his fairest dreams and most ardent aspirations were on the point of realisation. He died too soon for himself, but lived long enough to become identified with the literature of his country. Becquer's works, now for the first time collected and given to the world by a devoted friend, have reached several editions in Spain, and are gradually winning recognition elsewhere, the recognition slow but sure that awaits true genius.

A few words about his short and much tried life.

Gustavo Adolfo Becquer, son of an esteemed artist, was born at Seville in 1836. Left an orphan at an early age, with an only brother, the boon companion of after years, the pair became but too well acquainted with care and want ere they had fairly mastered the horn-book. At seventeen Gustavo set out for Madrid, where a friend found him poorly paid occupation in a public office. But the lad's passion for Shakespeare proved his ruin as a clerk. No sooner was his superior's back turned than he began to con and illustrate his favourite author. Caught in the act, he was, of course, summarily dismissed. He determined thenceforth to devote himself to literature; his brother Valeriano, now an artist of promise, joined him, and the two were never after separated. It was a desperate struggle for daily bread; both poet and painter forced to defer the interests of their "beloved children," as they called the *chefs d'œuvre* of their dreams, to sordid needs of the hour, sacrificing alike ambition and inborn creative faculty to keep the wolf from the door. They just catered to the market, supplying cheap literature and cheap pictures till better times should come. Courageously they looked forward to an artistic and literary future in which their genius should have full play.

But prosperity came too late. Hardship, disappointment, overwork had long told on the health of both. Valeriano died in September, 1870. In December of the same year Gustavo followed his brother to the grave. In each case the disease seems to have been consumption, accelerated by unfortunate conditions of life. "*Todo mortal*"—All is mortal—whispered the young writer just before his spirit passed away. Long before had his inner gaze steadfastly confronted the inevitable: calm and resigned, his only regret in dying so soon was the thought of work left unachieved.

Becquer has been called the Spanish Heine; he has also been likened to Hoffmann. His most striking compositions are certainly his stories, often old legends clothed in his own poetic language; his miscellaneous prose pieces may be described as arabesques, dainty, ornate, fanciful as the Moorish architecture so familiar to him. No tourist in Spain should omit to read these recollections of travel. The very spirit of Spanish romance breathes through every line. Toledo, especially, was the fountain head of his inspiration, and none who have visited that marvellous city will marvel at such enthusiasm. The weird, the supernatural exercised the strangest fascination over him, but every consideration was made subservient to art. If he does not always avoid the Spanish failing of redundancy, he makes each story, nevertheless, a finished piece of literary workmanship.

Let me give the reader, by way of example, "The Miserere of the Mountain."

The legend is narrated by a chance visitor to the Monastery of Fitero, in Spain. There he finds in the library some sheets of music in manuscript which strike him; he makes inquiries, and his cicerone, an old lay-brother, tells their history thus:—

One dark and rainy night, many and many a year ago, a pilgrim knocked at these doors, begging permission to dry his dripping clothes. Also bread and shelter.

The lay-brother who had opened to him, after having supplied his wants, began to make inquiries about his journey. Why was he afoot in such weather, whence had he come? and so forth.

"I am a musician," the pilgrim replied: "a stranger from far-off parts, from a country where in former days I was rich and famous. Alas! in my youth, music was in these hands a ministrant of evil; it aroused passions within my breast that led me to commit a crime. The story I need not tell. Sufficient to say in my old age I now seek to make reparation, and to turn to good uses the talents once employed to my soul's perdition, thus working out self-redemption by the very means that wrought my overthrow. But sincere as was my repentance, I found no fitting words into which to put my prayers for Divine pardon. One day my eyes lighted on the prayer of the Psalmist, 'Miserere mei, Domine,' and from that moment I burned with the desire to put this sublime appeal into music. Ah! could I only express thus what is in my heart! I am sure I should compose a Miserere such as never yet the ears of man listened to. Not a sinner harkening but would fall upon his knees, imploring pardon of God."

The pilgrim paused, sighed deeply, then once more opened his lips, the lay-brother listening attentively, also the shepherds belonging to the abbey lands, who were sheltering from the storm. "I have sought inspiration in vain, travelling through Germany, Italy and Spain, yet not a single Miserere has inspired me, and I may say that I have heard all."

"Ah!" said one of the shepherds, "you have never heard the 'Miserere of the Mountain'?"

"What is that?" asked the stranger, his curiosity greatly excited.

The shepherd added with an air of mystery. "Thereto hangs a story old as the hills and true as the Bible. Many years ago—fool, what am I saying?—hundreds of years ago, there stood in the heart of these mountains a famous monastery. It had been built—so the story goes—by a rich signor, who endowed it with his entire fortune, thus disinheriting his only son, a wicked fellow, who seems to have been a kind of devil incarnate. This ruffian was so enraged at his father's conduct that in the night, the holy evening of Maunday Thursday, with a band of companions as lawless as himself, he made a raid upon the monastery, just when the monks were at prayer and had begun to chant the Miserere. The wicked troop took possession of the church, murdered the holy men and wrecked the sacred building. The murderers then disappeared from that part of the country, hastening fast enough we may be sure to perdition.

"In the course of time the monastery became a mere rubbish heap, but the ruins may still be seen; they stand on the rocky hill whence descends the clear stream that waters our own abbey grounds."

"And the Miserere?" asked the pilgrim.

"One thing at a time, good pilgrim! The village folks were, of course, horrified at the crime. From generation to generation the story has been handed down by the posada fire on winter evenings; but what keeps the event alive in men's memories is the fact that once a year, on the anniversary of the wicked deed, a brilliant light is seen in the ruined church, and the strangest music is heard." The narrator paused and got out under his breath: "It is—it is the chanting of the murdered monks, who, snatched from life without a moment's preparation, thus come forth from purgatory to implore Divine pardon—in fine, to chant a Miserere!"

Then followed a pause, awe overtaking the group of listeners, all but one having heard the story for the hundredth time.

"And is the prodigy repeated every year?" at length asked the pilgrim, with a thoughtful look.

"This very night—remember to-day is Maunday Thursday—three hours later that Miserere will be heard."

"How far is it from hence to the ruined monastery?"

"About a league and a half. But, man alive! Are you mad?" asked the narrator, the rest looking on aghast. The stranger, rising, had resumed his half-dried cloak, his wallet and staff, and now made for the door.

"I am going to hear that marvellous music," he said with the utmost calm. "The Miserere I have sought so long! The Miserere of those who returning to earth after death know what it is to have died in sin!"

And before they could utter another word of remonstrance he

had crossed the threshold and was once more confronting the storm.

The wind soughed, making every hinge creak as if some iron hand were fain to wrench off the doors, the rain fell in torrents, beating against the window panes, whilst from time to time vivid flashes of lightning broke the pitchy darkness of the night.

"The fellow is stark mad," said one out of the group by the fire.

"True enough, mad he is," said another. Then, throwing on fresh logs, each wrapped himself in his sheepskin and composed himself to sleep.

Meantime the pilgrim, guided only by the trickling of the stream, had reached, after two hours' plodding through storm and rain, the precincts of the ruined church. The weather was now somewhat calmer, the rain fell at intervals only, the wind no longer blew a hurricane, but made a gentle moan. Nothing in the visible world prognosticated the supernatural.

"What if I have been befooled?" he asked himself, as he paused close to the broken walls. Hardly, however, had the thought taken shape within his mind than he heard noises wholly inexplicable in such a solitude. The ruined church was a mere shell, yet the striking of a clock now reached his ears, and immediately afterwards a bell pealed forth the hours—one, two, up to the eleventh.

All at once a brilliant light was seen flashing throughout the jagged masonry; arch, column, canopy became on a sudden distinctly outlined against the heavens, a blue, weird, phosphorescent light playing about the ruins.

And suddenly another and more marvellous transformation took place. He beheld a ruin no longer! Aisle and nave, transept and chapel, roof and altar were intact as if just emerged from the hands of the builder. The church was rebuilt by magic.

Then the trembling pilgrim was aware of a low, confused murmur issuing, as it seemed, from the very bowels of the earth, at first hardly distinguishable from the wind, gradually gaining in volume, till human voices could be heard, each becoming more and more plain.

Awe and curiosity now overcame the musician's bodily fear. Quitting his resting-place a little way off the ruins, he approached step by step, reaching at last the spot whence the voices issued. Peering into the darkness, he saw a sight that made his hair stand on end and his limbs quake with new impulses of terror.

With garments hanging loosely about their skeleton forms, the ghosts of the murdered monks one by one slowly emerged from the dark recesses of the rock on which the church stood, each chanting in a low, sepulchral voice, "Miserere mei, Domine, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam."

Having reached the church door, they filed in double line along the central aisle, ranging themselves on both sides of the choir, and

chanting in a louder and louder key. With their singing seemed to mingle eldritch sounds of the outer world—the plaintive surging of the wind, the sobbing of the rain, the cries of night birds. But more mystery still was in the music; something wholly indescribable; only the pealing of an organ could be compared with it—an organ of mightier volume than any as yet built by human hands.

The service began.

The musician, listening paralysed with wonder and consternation, seemed to himself to become part of the phantasmagoric scene, to belong, not to this mortal life, but to visions and the ghostly world below. When the monks came to the words, "In iniquitatibus conceptus sum" there arose a groan deep as if issuing from the breast of universal humanity aroused to a sudden consciousness of sin—an appeal sent up from the penitent and the unhappy throughout the entire peopled world. Now the chanting was sad and low, now a note of hope and cheerfulness, like a ray of sunshine piercing the gloom of wintry storm, triumph alternating with despair, till the scene underwent an utter and glorious transformation.

The church shone resplendent with celestial light, the skeletons of the monks became re-clothed with flesh, an aureole illumined the brow of each, the dome of heaven was suddenly unveiled, the very seats of the just, the angelic choirs about the great throne—all was as a splendour visible to mortal eyes. Seraph and cherub, angel and archangel, now united in jubilant strains, took up the verse, "Audite meo, dabis gaudium et lætitiam." Trumpet-like, the singing mounted to heaven; but the pilgrim heard and saw no more. He fell in a swoon on the cold stone.

Such was the old cicerone's story. The yellow manuscript that had awakened the stranger's curiosity was the pilgrim's attempt to put on paper the Miserere of the Mountain. He died in the monastery ere achieving his task.

This is only a short and slight example out of much that was written by Becquer, and it is to be hoped that a choice selection of this gifted young writer's works will ere long appear in English form. Genius is so rare that we can ill afford to neglect it, no matter its native soil or mood or manifestation.

His friend and biographer describes him as "an angel," modest, free from a spirit of detraction, his mind ever bent on intellectual things. The grosser aspects of existence, the worldlier forms of ambition—from these he stood utterly apart. Like his adored poet, Schiller, he lived wholly in the ideal world, the harsh actualities of daily life seeming to hurt him unconsciously to himself.

Becquer furnishes another example of genius struggling with poverty, and dying ere youth had passed, at the very moment that fame seemed about to crown him with its laurel wreath.

FEATHERSTON'S STORY.

AT THE MAISON ROUGE.

I HAVE called this Featherston's story, because it was through him that I heard about it—and, indeed, saw a little of it towards the end.

Buttermead, the wide straggling district to which Featherston enjoyed the honour of being doctor-in-ordinary, was as rural as any that can be found in Worcestershire. Featherston's house stood at the end of the village. Whitney Hall lay close by; as did our school, Dr. Frost's. In the neighbourhood were scattered a few other substantial residences, some farmers' homesteads and labourers' cottages. Featherston was a slim man, with long thin legs and a grey face of care. His patients (like the soldier's steam arm) gave him no rest day or night.

There's no need to go into details here about Featherston's people. His sister, Mary Ann, lived in his house at one time, and was almost as good a doctor for every-day ailments as he. She was not at all like him: a merry, talkative, sociable little woman, with black hair and quick, kindly dark eyes.

Our resident French master in those days at Dr. Frost's was one Monsieur Jules Cardiac: a small man with honest blue eyes in his clean-shaven face, and light brown hair cropped close to his head. He was an awful martinet at study, but a genial little gentleman out of it. To the surprise of Buttermead, he and Mary Featherston set up a courtship. It was carried on in sober fashion, as befitted a sober couple who had both left thirty years, and the rest, behind them; and after a summer or two of it they laid plans for their marriage and for living in France.

"I'm sure I don't know what on earth I shall do among the French, Johnny Ludlow," Mary said to me in her laughing way, when I and Bill Whitney were having tea at Featherston's one half-holiday, the week before the wedding. "Jules protests they are easier to get on with than the English; not so stiff and formal: but I don't pay attention to all he says, you know."

M. Jules Cardiac was going to settle down at his native place, Sainteville; a town on the opposite coast, which had a service of English steamers running to it two or three times a week. He had obtained the post of first classical master at the college there, and meant to spin out his salary (never large in French colleges),

by teaching French and mathematics to as many English pupils as he could obtain out of hours. Like other northern French seaport towns, Sainteville had its small colony of British residents.

"We shall get on; I am not afraid," answered Mary Featherston to a doubting remark made to her by old Mrs. Selby of the Court. "Neither I nor Jules have been accustomed to luxury, and we don't care for it. We'd as soon make our dinner of bread-and-butter and radishes, as of chicken and apple tart."

So the wedding took place, and they departed the same day for Sainteville. And of the first two or three years after that there's nothing to record, good or bad.

Selby Court lay just outside Buttermead. Its mistress, an ancient lady now, was related to the Preen family, of whom I spoke in that story which told of the tragical death of Oliver. Lavinia Preen, sister to Oliver's father, Gervase Preen, but younger, lived with Mrs. Selby as a sort of adopted daughter; and when the death of the father, old Mr. Preen, left nearly all his large family with scarcely any cheese to their bread, Mrs. Selby told Ann Preen, the youngest of them all, that she might come to her also. So Lavinia and Ann Preen lived at the Court and had no other home.

These two ladies were intimate with Mary Featherston, all three being much attached to one another. When Mary married and left her country for France, the Miss Preens openly resented it, saying she ought to have had more consideration. Did some premonitory instinct prompt that unreasonable resentment? I cannot say. No one can say. But it is certain that had Mary Featherston not gone abroad to live, the ominous chain of events fated to engulf the sisters could not have touched them, and this account, which is a perfectly true one, would never have been written.

For a short time after the marriage they and Mary Cardiac exchanged a letter now and then; not often, for foreign postage was expensive; and then it dropped.

Mrs. Selby became an invalid, and died. She left each of the two sisters seventy pounds a-year for life; if the one died, the other was to enjoy the whole; when both were dead it would lapse back to the Selby estate.

"Seventy pounds a-year!" remarked Ann Preen to her sister. "It does not seem very much, does it, Lavinia! Shall we be able to live upon it?"

They were seated in the wainscoted parlour at Selby Court, talking of the future. The funeral was over, and they must soon leave; for the house was waiting to be done up for the reception of its new master, Mr. Paul Selby; an old bachelor full of nervous fancies.

"We must live upon it, Nancy," said Lavinia in answer to her.

She was the stronger-minded of the two, and she looked it. A keen, practical woman, of rather more than middle height, with

smooth brown hair, pleasant dark hazel eyes and a bright glow in her cheeks. Ann (or Nancy, as she was more often called) was smaller and slighter, with a pretty face, a shower of fair ringlets, and mild, light blue eyes; altogether not unlike a pink and white wax doll.

"We should have been worse off, Nancy, had she not left us anything; and sometimes I have feared she might not," remarked Lavinia cheerfully. "It will be a hundred-and-forty pounds between us, dear; we can live upon that."

"Of course we can, if you think so, Lavinia," said the other, who deemed her elder sister wiser than anyone in the world, and revered her accordingly.

"But we should live cheaper abroad than here, I expect," continued Lavinia. "It's said money goes twice as far in France as in England. Suppose we were to go over, Nancy, and try? We could come back if we did not like it."

Nancy's eyes sparkled. "I think it would be delightful," she said. "Money go further in France—why to be sure it does! Aunt Emily is able to live like a princess at Tours, by all accounts. Yes, yes Lavinia, let us try France!"

One fine spring morning the Miss Preens packed up their bag and baggage and started for the Continent. They went direct to Tours, intending to make that place their pied-à-terre, as the French phrase it; at any rate for a time. It was not, perhaps, the wisest thing they could have done.

For Mrs. Magnus, formerly Emily Preen, and their late father's sister, did not welcome them warmly. She lived in style herself, one of the leading stars in the society of Tours; and she did not at all like that two middle-aged nieces, of straitened means, should take up their abode in the next street. So Mrs. Magnus met her nieces with the assurance that Tours would not do for them; it was too expensive a place; they would be swamped in it. Mrs. Magnus was drawing near to the close of her life then; had she known it, she might have been kinder, and let them remain; but she was not able to foresee the hour of that great event, which must happen to us all, any more than other people are. Oliver Preen was with her then, revelling in the sunny days which were flitting away on gossamer wings.

"Lavinia, do you think we can stay at Tours?"

The Miss Preens had descended at a fourth-rate hotel, picked out of the guide book. When Ann asked this question, they were sitting after dinner in the table d'hôte room, their feet on the sanded floor. Sanded floors were quite usual at that time in many parts of France.

"Stay here to put up with Aunt Emily's pride and insolence!" quickly answered Miss Preen. "No. I will tell you what I have

done, Ann. I wrote yesterday to Mary Cardiac, asking her about Sainteville; whether she thinks it will suit us, and so on. As soon as her answer comes—she's certain to say yes—we will *go*, dear, and leave Mrs. Magnus to her grandeur. And, once we are safe away, *I shall write her a letter*," added Lavinia, in decisive tones. "A letter which she won't like."

Madame Cardiac's answer came by return of post. It was as cordial as herself. Sainteville would be the very place for them, she said, and she should count the hours until they were there.

The Miss Preens turned their backs upon Tours, shaking its dust off their shoes. Lavinia had a little nest of accumulated money, so was at ease in that respect. And when the evening of the following day the railway terminus at Sainteville was reached, the pleasant, smiling face of Mary Cardiac was the first they saw outside the barrière. She must have been nearly forty now, but she did not look a day older than when she had left Buttermead. Miss Lavinia was a year or two older than Mary; Miss Ann a year or two younger.

"You must put up at the Hôtel des Princes," remarked Madame Cardiac. "It is the only really good one in the town. They won't charge you too much; my husband has spoken to the landlady. And you must spend to-morrow with me."

The hotel omnibus was waiting for them and other passengers, the luggage was piled on the roof, and Madame Cardiac accompanied them to the hotel. A handsome hotel, the sisters thought; quite another thing from the one at Tours. Mary Cardiac introduced them to the landlady, Madame Padevin, saw them seated down to tea and a cold fowl, and then left for the night.

With Sainteville the Miss Preens were simply charmed. It was a fresh, clean town, with wide streets, and good houses and old families, and some bright shops. The harbour was large, and the pier extended out to the open sea.

"I *should* like to live here!" exclaimed Miss Lavinia, sitting down at Madame Cardiac's, in a state of rapture. "I never saw such a nice town, or such a lovely market."

They had been about all the morning with Madame Cardiac. It was market-day, Wednesday. The market was held on the Grande Place; and the delicious butter, the eggs, the fresh vegetables, the flowers, and the poultry, took Miss Lavinia's heart by storm. Nancy was more taken with the picturesque market women, in their white caps and long gold ear-rings. Other ladies were doing their marketings as well as Madame Cardiac. She spoke with most of them, in French or in English, as the case might be. Under the able tuition of her husband, she spoke French fluently now.

Madame Cardiac's habitation—very nice, small and compact—was in Rue de la Pomme Cuite. The streets have queer names in some of these old French towns. It was near the college, which was convenient for M. Cardiac. Here they lived, with their elderly

servant, Pauline. The same routine went on daily in the steady little domicile from year's end to year's end.

"Jules goes to the college at eight o'clock every week-day, after a cup of coffee and a petit pain," said Madame to her guests, "and he returns at five to dinner. He takes his déjeûner in the college at twelve, and I take mine alone at home. On Sundays he has no duty: we attend the French Protestant church in a morning, dine at one o'clock, and go for a walk in the afternoon."

"You have no children, Mary?"

Mary Cardiac's lively face turned sad as she answered: "There was one little one; she stayed with us six months, and then God took her. I wrote to you of it, you know, Lavinia. No, we have not any children. Best not, Jules says; and I agree with him. They might only leave us when we have learnt to love them; and that's a hard trial to bear. Best as it is."

"I'm sure I should never learn to speak French, though we lived here for a century," exclaimed Miss Lavinia. "Only to hear you jabbering to your servant, Mary, quite distracts one's ears."

"Yes, you would. You would soon pick up enough to be understood in the shops and at market."

At five o'clock, home came M. Cardiac. He welcomed the Miss Preens with honest, genuine pleasure, interspersed with a little French ceremony; making them about a dozen bows apiece before he met the hands held out to him.

They had quite a gala dinner. Soup to begin with; broth, the English ladies inwardly pronounced it; and then fish. A small cod, bought by Madame Cardiac at the fish-market in the morning, with oyster sauce. Ten sous she had given for the cod, for she knew how to bargain now, and six sous for a dozen oysters, ever so much larger than a five-franc piece. This was followed by a delicious little fricandeau of veal, and that by a tarte à la crême from the pastry-cook's. She told her guests unreservedly what all the dishes cost, to show them how reasonably people might live at Sainteville.

Over the coffee, after dinner, the question of their settling in the place was fully gone into, for the benefit of M. Cardiac's opinions: who gave them in good English.

"Depend upon it, Lavinia, you could not do better," remarked Mary Cardiac. "If you cannot make your income do here, you cannot anywhere."

"We want to make it do well; not to betray our poverty, but to be able to maintain a fairly good appearance," said Lavinia. "You understand me, I am sure, monsieur."

"But certainly, mademoiselle," he answered; "it is what we all like to do at Sainteville, I reckon."

"And *can* do, if we are provident," added Madame. "French ways are not English ways. Our own income is small, Lavinia, yet we put by out of it."

"A fact that goes without saying," confirmed the pleasant little man. "If we did not put by, where would my wife be when I am no longer able to work?"

"Provisions being so cheap——What did you say, Nancy?" asked Madame Cardiac, interrupting herself.

"I was going to say that *I* could live upon oysters, and should like to," replied Nancy, shaking back her flaxen curls with a laugh. "Half-a-dozen of those great big oysters would make me a lovely dinner any day—and the cost would be only three halfpence."

"And only fivepence the cost of that beautiful fish," put in her sister. "In Sainteville our income would amply suffice."

"It seems to me that it would, mesdemoiselles," observed M. Cardiac. "Three thousand five hundred francs yearly! We French should think it a sufficient sum. Doubtless much would depend upon the way in which you laid it out."

"What should we have to pay for lodgings, Mary?" inquired Lavinia. "Just a nice sitting-room and two small bed-rooms; or a large room with two beds in it; and to be waited on."

"Oh, you won't find that at Sainteville," was the unexpected answer. "Nobody lets lodgings, English fashion: it's not the custom over here. You can get a furnished apartment, but the people will not wait upon you. There is always a little kitchen let with the rooms, and you must have your own servant."

It was the first check the ladies had received. They sat thinking. "Dear me!" exclaimed Nancy. "No lodgings!"

"Would the apartments you speak of be very dear?" asked Lavinia.

"That depends upon the number of rooms and on the situation," replied Madame Cardiac. "I cannot call to mind just now any small apartment that is vacant. If you like we will go to-morrow and look about.'

It was so arranged. And little M. Cardiac attended the ladies back to the Hôtel des Princes at the sober hour of nine o'clock, and bowed them into the porte cochère with two sweeps of his hat, wishing them the good evening and the very good night.

II.

THURSDAY morning. Nancy Preen awoke with a sick headache and could not get up. But in the afternoon, when she was better, they went to Mary Cardiac's, and all three set off to look for an apartment—not meeting with great success.

All they saw were too large, and priced accordingly. There was one, indeed, in the Rue Lamartine, which suited as to size, but the rooms were inconvenient and stuffy; and there was another small one on the Grande Place, dainty and desirable, but the rent was very high. Madame Cardiac at once offered the landlord half-price, French custom: she dealt at his shop for her groceries. No, no, he answered;

his apartment was the nicest in the town for its size, as Mesdames saw, and it was in the best situation—and not a single sou would the worthy grocer abate.

They were growing tired, then; and five o'clock, the universal hour at Sainteville for the late dinner, was approaching.

"Come round to me after your dinner, and we will talk it over," said Mary Cardiac, when they parted. "I will give you a cup of tea."

They dined at the table d'hôte, which both of them thought charming, and then proceeded to the Rue Pomme Cuite. M. Cardiac was on the point of going out, to spend an hour at the Café Pillaud, but he put down his hat to wait awhile, out of respect to the ladies. They told him about not having found an apartment to suit them.

"Of course we have not looked in all parts of the town, only in the most likely ones," said Madame Cardiac. "There are large apartments to be had, but no small ones. We can search again to-morrow."

"I suppose there's not a little house to be had cheap, if we cannot find an apartment?" cried Miss Nancy, who was in love with Sainteville and had set her heart upon stopping there.

"Tiens," quickly spoke M. Cardiac in French to his wife, "there's that petite maison rouge belonging to Madame Veuve Sauvage, in the Place Ronde. It is still to let: I saw the affiche in the shop window to-day. What do you think of it, Marie?"

Madame Cardiac did not seem to know quite what to think. She looked at her husband, then at the eager faces of her two friends; but she did not speak.

About half-way down the Rue de Tessin, a busy street leading to the port, was a wide opening, giving on to the Place Ronde. The Place Ronde agreed with its name, for it was round, somewhat in form of a horseshoe. Some fifteen or sixteen substantial houses were built round it, each having a shop for its basement; and trees were scattered about, green and feathery, affording a slight though pleasant shelter from the hot sun in summer weather.

The middle house at the bottom of the Place Ronde; exactly facing the opening from the Rue de Tessin, was a very conspicuous house indeed, inasmuch as it was painted red, whilst the other houses were white. All of them had green persienne shutters to the upper windows. The shop, a large one, belonging to this red house was that of the late Monsieur Jean Sauvage, "Marchand de Vin en gros et en détail," as the announcement over his door used to run in the later years of his life. But when Jean Sauvage commenced business, in that same shop, it was only as a retail vendor. Casting about in his mind one day for some means by which his shop might be distinguished from other wine shops and attract customers, he hit upon the plan of painting the house red. No sooner thought of than done. A painter was called, who converted the white walls into a fiery vermilion, and stretched a board across

the upper part, between the windows of the first and second floors, on which appeared in large letters "A la Maison Rouge."

Whether this sort of advertisement drew the public, or whether it might have been the sterling respectability and devotion to business of M. Sauvage, he got on most successfully. The Marchand en détail became also Marchand en gros, and in course of time he added liqueurs to his wares. No citizen of Sainteville was more highly esteemed than he, both as a man and a tradesman. Since his death the business had been carried on by his widow, aided by the two sons, Gustave and Emile. Latterly Madame Veuve Sauvage had given up all work to them; she was now in years, and had well earned her rest. They lived in the rooms over the shop, which were large and handsome. In former days when the energies of herself and her husband were chiefly devoted to acquiring and saving money, they had let these upper rooms for a good sum yearly. Old Mme. Sauvage might be seen any day now sitting at a front window, looking out upon the world between her embroidered white curtains.

The door of this prosperous shop lay between the two windows. The one displayed a few bottles of wine, most of them in straw cases; in the other window were clear flacons of liqueurs; chartreuse, green and yellow; curaçoa, warm and ruby; Eau de vie de Danzick, with its fluttering gold leaf, and many other sorts.

However, it is not with the goods of Mme. Veuve Sauvage that we have to do, but with her premises. Standing in front of the shop, as if coveting a bottle of that choice wine for to-day's dinner, or an immediate glass of delicious liqueur, you may see on your right hand, but to the left of the shop, the private door of the house. On the other side the shop is also a door which opens to a narrow entry. The entry looks dark, even in the mid-day sun, for it is pretty long, extending down a portion of the side of the Maison Rouge, which is a deep house, and terminating in a paved yard surrounded by high buildings. At the end of the yard is a small dwelling, with two modern windows, one above the other. Near the under window is the entrance door, painted oak colour, with a brass knob, a bell wire with a curious handle, and a knocker. This little house the late M. Sauvage had also caused to be converted into a red one, the same as the larger.

In earlier days, when Jean Sauvage and his wife were putting their shoulders to the wheel, they had lived in the little house with their children; the two sons and the daughter, Jeanne. Jeanne Sauvage married early and very well, an avocat. But since they had left it, the house in the yard seemed to have been, as the widow Sauvage herself expressed it, unlucky. The first of the tenants had died there; the second had disappeared, decamped in fact, to avoid paying rent and other debts; the third had moved into a better house; and the fourth, an old widow lady, had also died, owing a year's rent to Mme. Sauvage, and no money to pay it.

It was of this small dwelling, lying under the shadow of the Maison Rouge, that M. Cardiac had thought. Turning to the Miss Preens, he gave them briefly a few particulars, and said he believed the house was to be had on very reasonable terms.

"What do you call it?" exclaimed Lavinia. "The little red house?"

"Yes, we call it that," said M. Cardiac. "Emile Sauvage was talking of it to me the other evening at the café, saying they would be glad to have it tenanted."

"I fear our good friends here would find it dull," remarked Madame Cardiac to him. "It is in so dull a situation, you know, Jules."

"Mon amie, I do not myself see how that signifies," said he in reply. "If your house is comfortable inside, does it matter what it looks out upon?"

"Very true," assented Miss Lavinia, whose hopes had gone up again. "But this house may not be furnished, Mary."

"It is partly furnished," said Madame Cardiac. "When the old lady who was last in it died they had to take her furniture for the rent. It was not much, I have heard."

"We should not want much, only two of us," cried Miss Ann eagerly. "Do let us go to look at it to-morrow!"

On the following day, Friday, the Miss Preens went to the Place Ronde, piloted by Mary Cardiac. They were struck with admiration at the Maison Rouge, all a fiery glow in the morning sun, and a novelty to English eyes. Whilst Madame Cardiac went into the shop to explain and ask for the key, the sisters gazed in at the windows. Lying on the wine bottles was a small square blackboard on which was written in white letters, "Petite Maison à louer."

M. Gustave Sauvage, key in hand, saluted the ladies in English, which he spoke fairly well, and accompanied them to view the house. The sun was very bright that day, and the confined yard did not look so dull as at a less favourable time; and perhaps the brilliant red of the little house, at which Nancy laughed, imparted a cheerfulness to it. M. Gustave opened the door with a latch key, drew back, and waited for them to enter.

The first to do so, or to attempt to do so, was Miss Preen. But no sooner had she put one foot over the threshold than she drew back with a start, somewhat discomposing the others by the movement.

"What is it, Lavinia?" inquired Ann.

"Something seemed to startle me, and throw me back!" exclaimed Lavinia Preen, regaining her lost breath. "Perhaps it was the gloom of the passage: it is very dark."

"Pardon, mesdames," spoke M. Gustave politely. "If the ladies will forgive my entering before them, I will open the salon door."

The passage was narrow. The broad shoulders of M. Gustave

almost touched the wall on either side as he walked along. Almost at the other end of it on his left hand was the salon door; he threw it open, and a little light shone forth. The passage terminated in a small square recess. At the back of this was fixed a shallow marble slab for holding things, above which was a cupboard let into the wall. On the right of the recess was the staircase; and opposite the staircase the kitchen door, the kitchen being behind the salon.

The salon was nice when they got into it; the paint was fresh, the paper light and handsome. It was of good size, and its large window looked to the front. The kitchen opened upon a small back yard, furnished with a pump and a shed for wood or coal. On the floor above were two very good chambers, one behind the other. Opposite these, on the other side the passage, was another room, not so large, but of fair size. It was apparently built out over some part of the next-door premises, and was lighted by a skylight. All the rooms were fresh and good, and the passage had a window at the end.

Altogether it was not an inconvenient abode for people who did not go in for show. The furniture was plain, clean and useful, but it would have to be added to. There were no grates, not even a cooking stove in the kitchen. It was very much the Sainteville custom at that period for tenants to provide grates for themselves, plenty of which could be bought or hired for a small sum. An easy-chair or two would be needed; tea-cups and saucers and wine-glasses; and though there were wash-hand-stands, these contained no jugs or basins; and there were no sheets or table-cloths or towels, no knives or forks, no brooms or brushes, and so on.

"There is only this one sitting-room, you perceive," remarked Madame Cardiac, as they turned about, looking at the salon again, after coming downstairs.

"Yes, that's a pity, on account of dinner," replied Miss Nancy.

"One of our tenants made a pretty salon of the room above this, and this the salle à manger," remarked M. Gustave. "Mesdames might like to do the same, possibly?"

He had pointedly addressed Miss Lavinia, near whom he stood. She did not answer. In fact—it was a very curious thing, but a fact—Miss Lavinia had not spoken a word since she entered. She had gone through the house taking in its features in complete silence, just as if that shock at the door had scared away her speech.

The rent asked by M. Gustave, acting for his mother, was very moderate indeed—twenty pounds a-year, including the use of the furniture. There would be no taxes to pay, he said; absolutely none; the taxes of this little house, being upon their premises, were included in their own. But to ensure this low rental, the house must be taken for five years.

"Of course we will take it—won't we, Lavinia?" cried Miss Ann in a loud whisper. "*Only* twenty pounds a-year! Just think!"

"Sir," Miss Lavinia said to M. Gustave, speaking at last, "the house would suit us in some respects, especially as regards rent. But we might find it too lonely: and I should hardly like to be bound for five years."

All that was of course for Mesdames' consideration, he frankly responded. But he thought that if the ladies were established in it with their ménage about them, they would not find it lonely.

"We will give you an answer to-morrow or Monday," decided Miss Lavinia.

They went about the town all that day with Madame Cardiac; but nothing in the shape of an apartment could be found to suit them. Madame invited them again to tea in the evening. And by that time they had decided to take the house. Nancy was wild about it. What with the change from the monotony of their country house to the bright and busy streets, the gay out-door life, the delights of the table d'hôte, Ann Preen looked upon Sainteville as an earthly paradise.

"The house is certainly more suited to you than anything else we have seen," observed Madame Cardiac. "I have nothing to say against the little Maison Rouge, except its dull situation."

"Did it strike you, Mary, apart from its situation, as being gloomy?" asked Lavinia.

"No. Once you are in the rooms they are cheerful enough."

"It did me. Gloomy, with a peculiar gloom, you understand. I'm sure the passage was dark as night. It must have been its darkness that startled me as we were going in."

"By the way, Lavinia, what was the matter with you then?" interrupted her sister.

"I don't know, Nancy; I said at the time I did not know. With my first step into the passage, some horror seemed to meet me and drive me back."

"Some horror!" repeated Nancy.

"I seemed to feel it so. I had still the glare of the streets and of the fiery red walls in my eyes, which must have caused the house passage to look darker than it ought. That was all, I suppose—but it turned me sick with a sort of fear; sick and shivery."

"That salon may be made as pretty a room as any in Sainteville," remarked Madame Cardiac. "Many of the English residents here have only one salon in their apartments. You see, we don't hold with ceremony; France is not like England."

On the morrow the little house, under the wing of the Maison Rouge, was secured by the Miss Preens. They took it in their joint names for five years. To complete the transaction they were ushered upstairs to the salon and presence of Madame Veuve Sauvage; a rather stately-looking old lady, attired in a voluminous black silk robe and a mourning cap of fine muslin. Madame, who could not speak a syllable of English, conversed graciously with her

future tenants through the interpretation of Mary Cardiac, offering to be useful to them in any way she could. Lavinia and Ann Preen both signed the bail, or agreement, and Madame Veuve Sauvage likewise signed it; by virtue of which she became their landlady, and they her tenants of the little house for five years. Madame Cardiac, and a shopman who came upstairs for the purpose, signed as witnesses.

Wine and the little cakes called pistolets were then introduced; and so the bargain was complete.

Oh! if some kindly spirit from the all-seeing world above could only have whispered a hint to those ill-fated sisters of what they were doing!—had only whispered a warning in time to prevent it! Might not that horror, which fell upon Lavinia as she was about to pass over the door-sill, have served her as such? But who regards these warnings when they come to us? who personally applies them? None.

Having purchased or hired the additional things required, the Miss Preens took possession of their house. Nancy had the front bed-chamber, which Lavinia thought rather the best, and so gave it up to her; Lavinia took the back one. The one opposite, with the skylight, remained unoccupied, as their servant did not sleep in the house. Not at all an uncommon custom at Sainteville.

An excellent servant had been found for them in the person of Flore Pamart, a widow, who was honest, cooked well, and could talk away in English: all recommendations that the ladies liked. Flore let herself in with a latch-key before breakfast, and left as soon after five o'clock in the evening as she could get the dinner things removed. Madame Flore Pamart had one little boy named Dion, who went to school by day, but was at home night and morning; for which reason his mother could only take a daily service.

Thus the Miss Preens became part of the small colony of English at Sainteville. They took sittings in the English Protestant church, which was not much more than a room; and they subscribed to the casino on the port when it opened for the summer season, spending many an evening there, listening to the music, watching the dancing when there was any, and chattering with the acquaintances they met. They were well regarded, these new-comers, and they began to speak French after a fashion. Now and then they went out to a soirée; once in a way gave one in return. Very sober soirées indeed were those of Sainteville; consisting (as Sam Weller might inform us) of tea at seven o'clock with hot galette, conversation, cake at ten (gâteau Suisse or gâteau au rhum), and a glass of Picardin wine.

They were pleased with the house, once they had settled down in it, and never a shadow of regret crossed either of them for having taken the little Maison Rouge.

In this way about a twelvemonth wore on.

III.

It was a fine morning at the beginning of April; the sun being particularly welcome, as Sainteville had latterly been favoured with a spell of ill-natured, bitter east winds. About eleven o'clock, Miss Preen and her sister turned out of their house to take a walk on the pier—which they liked to do on most days, wind and weather permitting. In going down the Rue des Arbres, they were met by a fresh-looking little elderly gentleman, with rather long white hair and wearing a white necktie. He stopped to salute the ladies, bowing ceremoniously low to each of them. It was Monsieur le Docteur Dupuis, a kindly man of skilful reputation, who had now mostly, though not altogether, given up practice to his son, M. Henri Dupuis. Miss Lavinia had a little acquaintance with the doctor, and took occasion to ask him news of the public welfare; for there was raging in the town the malady called la grippe, which, being interpreted, means influenza.

It was not much better at present, Dupuis answered; but this genial sunshine he hoped would begin to drive it away: and, with another bow, he passed onward.

The pier was soon reached, and they enjoyed their walk upon it. The sunlight glinted on the rather turbulent waves of the sea in the distance, but there was not much breeze to be felt on land. When nearing the top of the pier their attention was attracted to a fishing boat, which was tumbling about rather unaccountably in its efforts to make the harbour.

"It almost looks from here as though it had lost its rudder, Nancy," remarked Miss Lavinia.

They halted, and stood looking over the side at the object of interest; not particularly noticing that a gentleman stood near them, also looking at the same through an opera glass. He was spare, of middle height and middle age; his hair was grey, his face pale and impassive; the light overcoat he wore was of fashionable English cut.

"Oh, Lavinia, look, look!—It is coming right on to the end of the pier," cried Ann Preen.

"Hush, Nancy, don't excite yourself," said Miss Lavinia, in lowered tones. "It will take care not to do that."

The gentleman gave a wary glance at them. He saw two ladies dressed alike, in handsome black velvet mantles, and bonnets with violet feathers; by which he judged them to be sisters, though there was no resemblance in face. The elder had clear-cut features, a healthy colour, dark brown hair, worn plain, and a keen, sensible expression. The other was fair, with blue eyes and light ringlets.

"Pardon me," he said, turning to them, and his accent was that of a gentleman. "May I offer you the use of my glasses?"

"Oh, thank you!" exclaimed Nancy, in a light tone, borderin

on a giggle ; and she accepted the glasses. She was evidently pleased with the offer and with the stranger.

Lavinia, on the contrary, was not. The moment she saw his full face she shrank from it—shrank from him. The feeling might have been as unaccountable as that which came over her when she had been first entering the petite Maison Rouge ; but it was there. However, she put it from her, and thanked him.

"I don't think I see so well with the glasses as without them ; it seems all a mist," remarked Nancy, who was standing next the stranger.

"They are not properly focused for you. Allow me," said he, as he took the glasses from her to alter them. "Young eyes need a less powerful focus than elderly ones like mine."

He spoke in a laughing tone ; Nancy, fond of compliments, giggled outright this time. She was approaching forty ; he might have been ten years older. They continued standing there, watching the fishing boat, and exchanging remarks at intervals. When it had made the harbour without accident, the Miss Preens wished him good-morning, and went back down the pier ; he took off his hat to them, and walked the other way.

"What a *charming* man," exclaimed Nancy, when they were at a safe distance.

"I don't like him," dissented Lavinia.

"Not like him !" echoed the other in surprise. "Why, Lavinia, his manners are delightful. I wonder who he is ?"

When nearly home, in turning into the Place Ronde, they met an English lady of their acquaintance, the wife of Major Smith. She had been ordering in a dozen of Vin Picardin from the Maison Rouge. As they stood talking together, the gentleman of the pier passed up the Rue de Tessin. He lifted his hat, and they all, including Mrs. Smith, bowed.

"Do you know him ?" quickly asked Nancy, in a whisper.

"Hardly that," answered Mrs. Smith. "When we were passing the Hôtel des Princes this morning, a gentleman turned out of the courtyard, and he and my husband spoke to one another. The Major said to me afterwards that he had formerly been in the—I forget which—regiment. He called him Mr. Fennel."

Now, as ill-fortune had it, Miss Preen found herself very poorly after she got home. She began to sneeze and cough, and thought she must have taken cold through standing on the pier to watch the vagaries of the fishing smack.

"I hope you are not going to have the influenza !" cried Nancy, her blue eyes wide with concern.

But the influenza it proved to be. Miss Preen seemed about to have it badly, and lay in bed the next day. Nancy proposed to send Flore for M. Dupuis, but Lavinia said she knew how to treat herself as well as he could treat her.

The next day she was no better. Poor Nancy had to go out alone, or to stay indoors. She did not like doing the latter at all; it was too dull; her own inclination would have led her abroad all day and every day.

"I saw Captain Fennel on the pier again," said she to her sister that afternoon, when she was making the tea at Lavinia's bedside, Flore having carried up the tray.

"I hope you did not talk to him, Ann," spoke the invalid, as well as she could articulate.

"I talked a little," said Nancy, turning hot, conscious that she had gossipped with him for three quarters of an hour. "He stopped to speak to me; I could not walk on rudely."

"Anyway, don't talk to him again, my dear. I do not like that man."

"What is there to dislike in him, Lavinia?"

"That I can't say. His countenance is not a good one; it is shifty, deceitful. He is a man you could never trust."

"I'm sure I've heard you say the same of other people."

"Because I can read faces," returned Lavinia.

"Oh—well—I consider Captain Fennel's is a *handsome* face," debated Nancy.

"Why do you call him Captain?"

"He calls himself so," answered Nancy. "I suppose it was his rank in the army when he retired. They retain it afterwards by courtesy, don't they, Lavinia?"

"I am not sure. It depends upon whether they retire in rotation or sell out, I fancy. Mrs. Smith said the Major called him Mr. Fennel, and he ought to know. There, I can't talk any more, Nancy, and the man is nothing to us that we need discuss him."

La grippe had taken rather sharp hold of Lavinia Preen, and she was upstairs for ten days. On the first afternoon she went down to the salon, Captain Fennel called, very much to her surprise; and, also to her surprise, he and Nancy appeared to be pretty intimate.

In point of fact, they had met every day, generally upon the pier. Nancy had said nothing about it at home. She was neither sly nor deceitful in disposition; rather notably simple and unsophisticated; but, after Lavinia's reproof the first time she told about meeting him, she would not tell again.

Miss Preen behaved coolly to him; which he would not appear to see. She sat over the fire, wrapped in a shawl, for it was a cold afternoon. He stayed only a little time, and put his card down on the slab near the stairs when he left. Lavinia had it brought to her.

"Mr. Edwin Fennel."

"Then he is not Captain Fennel," she observed. "But, Nancy, what in the world could have induced the man to call here? And how is it you seem to be familiar with him?"

"I have met him out-of-doors sometimes while you were ill,"

said Nancy. "As to his calling here—he came, I suppose, out of politeness. There's no harm in it, Lavinia."

Miss Lavinia did not say there was. But she disliked the man too much to favour his acquaintanceship. Instinct warned her against him.

How little was she prepared for what was to follow! Before she was well out-of-doors again, before she had been anywhere except to church, Nancy gave her a shock. With no end of simperings and blushings, she confessed that she had been asked to marry Captain Fennel.

Had Miss Lavinia Preen been, herself, politely asked to marry a certain gentleman, popularly supposed to reside underground, she would not have been much more indignantly startled. Perhaps "frightened" would be the better word for it.

"But—you *would* not, Nancy!" she gasped when she found her voice.

"I don't know," simpered foolish Nancy. "I—I—think him very nice and gentlemanly, Lavinia."

Lavinia came out of her fright sufficiently to reason. She strove to show Nancy how utterly unwise such a step would be. They knew nothing of Captain Fennel or his antecedents; to become his wife might just be courting misery and destruction. Nancy ceased to argue; and Lavinia hoped she had yielded.

Both the sisters kept a diary. But for that fact, and also that the diaries were preserved, Featherston could not have arrived at the details of the story so explicitly. About this time, a trifle earlier or later, Ann Preen wrote as follows in hers:

"April 16th.—I met Captain Fennel on the pier again this morning. I do *think* he goes there because he knows he may meet me. Lavinia is not out yet; she has not quite got rid of that Grip, as they stupidly call it here. I'm sure it has gripped her. We walked quite to the end of the pier, and then I sat down on the edge for a little while, and he stood talking to me. I do wish I could tell Lavinia of these meetings; but she was so cross the first day I met him, and told her of it, that I don't like to. Captain Fennel lent me his glasses as usual, and I looked at the London steamer, which was coming in. Somehow we fell to talking of the Smiths; he said they were poor, had not much more than the Major's half-pay. 'Not like you rich people, Miss Nancy,' he said—he thinks that's my right name. 'Your income is different from theirs.' 'Oh,' I screamed out, 'why it's only a hundred and forty pounds a-year!' 'Well,' he answered, smiling, 'that's a comfortable sum for a place like this; five francs will buy as much at Sainteville as half-a-sovereign will in England.' Which is pretty nearly true."

Skipping a few entries of little importance, we come to another.

"May 1st, and such a lovely day! It reminds me of one May-day at home, when the Jacks-in-the-green were dancing on the grass-plot before the Court windows at Buttermead, and Mrs. Selby sat watching

them, as pleased as they were, saying she should like to dance, too, if she could only go first to the mill to be ground young again. Jane and Edith Peckham were spending the day with us. It was just such a day as this, warm and bright; light, fleecy clouds flitting across the blue sky. I wish Lavinia were out to enjoy it! but she is hardly strong enough for long walks yet, and only potters about, when she does get out, in the Rue des Arbres or the Grande Place, or perhaps over to see Mary Cardiac.

"I don't know what to do. I lay awake all last night, and sat moping yesterday, thinking what I *could* do. Edwin wants me to marry him; I told Lavinia, and she absolutely forbids it, saying I should rush upon misery. *He* says I should be happy as the day's long. I feel like a distracted lunatic, not knowing which of them is right, or which opinion I ought to yield to. I have obeyed Lavinia all my life; we have never had a difference before; her wishes have been mine, and mine have been hers. But I *can't* see why she need have taken up this prejudice against him, for I'm sure he's more like an angel than a man; and, as he whispers to me, Nancy Fennel would be a prettier name than Nancy Preen. I said to him to-day, 'My name is Ann, not really Nancy.' 'My dear,' he answered, 'I shall always call you Nancy; I love the simple name.'

"I no longer talk about him to Lavinia, or let her suspect that we still meet on the pier. It would make her angry, and I can't bear that. I dare not hint to her what Edwin said to-day—that he should take matters into his own hand. He means to go over to Dover, *viâ* Calais; stay at Dover a fortnight, as the marriage law requires, and then come back to fetch me; and after the marriage has taken place we shall return here to live.

"Oh, dear, what am I to do? It will be a *dreadful* thing to deceive Lavinia; and it will be equally dreadful to lose *him*. He declares that if I do not agree to this he shall set sail for India (where he used to be with his regiment), and never, never see me again. Good gracious! *never* to see me again!

"The worst is, he wants to go off to Dover at once, giving one no time for consideration! Must I say Yes, or No? The uncertainty shakes me to pieces. He laughed to-day when I said something of this, assuring me Lavinia's anger would pass away like a summer cloud when I was his wife; that sisters had no authority over one another, and that Lavinia's opposition arose from selfishness only, because she did not want to lose me. '*Risk it*, Nancy,' said he; 'she'll receive you with open arms when I bring you back from Dover.' If I could only think so! Now and then I feel inclined to confide my dilemma to Mary Cardiac, and ask her opinion, only that I fear she might tell Lavinia."

Mr. Edwin Fennel quitted Sainteville. When he was missed

people thought he might have gone for good. But one Saturday morning some time onwards, when the month of May was drawing towards its close, Miss Lavinia, out with Nancy at market, came full upon Captain Fennel in the crowd on the Grande Place. He held out his hand.

"I thought you had left Sainteville, Mr. Fennel," she remarked, meeting his hand and the sinister look in his face unwillingly.

"Got back this morning," he said; "travelled by night. Shall be leaving again to-day or to-morrow. How are *you*, Miss Nancy?"

Lavinia pushed her way to the nearest poultry stall. "Will you come here, Ann?" she said. "I want to choose a fowl."

She began to bargain in half-French, half-English, with the poultry man, all to get rid of that other man, and she looked round, expecting Nancy had followed her. Nancy had not stirred from the spot near the butter baskets: she and Captain Fennel had their heads together, he talking hard and fast.

They saw Lavinia looking at them; looking angry, too. "Remember," impressively whispered Captain Fennel to Nancy: and, lifting his hat to Lavinia, over the white caps of the market women, he disappeared across the Place.

"I wonder what that man has come back for?" cried Miss Preen, as Nancy reached her—not that she had any suspicion. "And I wonder you should stay talking with him, Nancy!"

Nancy did not answer.

Sending Flore—who had attended them with her market basket—home with the fowl and eggs and vegetables, they called at the butcher's and the grocer's, and then went home themselves. Miss Preen then remembered that she had forgotten one or two things, and must go out again. Nancy remained at home. When Lavinia returned, which was not for an hour, for she had met various friends and stayed to gossip, her sister was in her room. Flore thought Mademoiselle Nancy was setting her drawers to rights: she had heard her opening and shutting them.

Time went on until the afternoon. Just before five o'clock, when Flore came in to lay the cloth for dinner, Lavinia, sitting at the window, saw her sister leave the house and cross the yard, a good-sized paper parcel in her hand.

"Why, that is Miss Nancy," she exclaimed in much surprise. "Where can she be going to now?"

"Miss Nancy came down the stairs as I was coming in here," replied Flore. "She said to me that she had just time to run to Madame Cardiac's before dinner."

"Hardly," dissented Miss Lavinia. "What can she be going for?"

As five o'clock struck, Flore (always punctual, from self-interest) came in to ask if she should serve the fish; but was told to wait until Miss Nancy returned. When half-past five was at hand, and

Nancy had not appeared, Miss Preen ordered the fish in, remarking that Madame Cardiac must be keeping her sister to dinner.

Afterwards Miss Preen set out for the casino, expecting she should meet them both there; for Lavinia and Nancy had intended to go. Madame Cardiac was not a subscriber, but she sometimes paid her ten sous and went in. It would be quite a pretty sight to-night—a children's dance. Lavinia soon joined some friends there, but the others did not come.

At eight o'clock she was in the Rue de la Pomme Cuite, approaching Madame Cardiac's. Pauline, in her short woollen petticoats, and shoeless feet thrust into wooden sabots, was splashing buckets of water before the door to scrub the pavement, and keeping up a screaming chatter with the other servants in the street, who were doing the same, Saturday night fashion.

Madame Cardiac was in the salon, sitting idle in the fading light; her sewing lay on the table. Lavinia's eyes went round the room, but she saw no one else in it.

"Mary, where is Nancy?" she asked, as Madame Cardiac rose to greet her with outstretched hands.

"I'm sure I don't know," answered Madame Cardiac lightly. "She has not been here. Did you think she had?"

"She dined here—did she not?"

"What, Nancy? Oh, no. I and Jules dined alone. He is out now, giving a French lesson. I have not seen Nancy since—let me see—since Thursday, I think; the day before yesterday."

Lavinia Preen sat down, half-bewildered. She related the history of the evening.

"It is elsewhere that Nancy is gone," remarked Madame Cardiac. "Flore must have misunderstood her."

Concluding that to be the case, and that Nancy might already be at home, Lavinia returned at once to the petite Maison Rouge, Mary Cardiac bearing her company in the sweet summer twilight. Lavinia opened the door with her latch-key. Flore had departed long before. There were three latch-keys to the house, Nancy possessing one of them.

They looked into every room, and called out Nancy, Nancy. But she was not there.

Nancy Preen had gone off with Captain Fennel by the six o'clock train, en route for Dover, there to be converted into Mrs. Fennel.

And had Nancy foreseen the terrible events and final crime which this most disastrous step would bring about, she might have chosen, rather than take it, to run away to the Protestant cemetery outside the gates of Sainteville, there to lay herself down to die.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

ON BOARD THE "BATAVIA."

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.

A Modern Ruth.

WE left the Albert Dock on Thursday morning. There had not been a gleam of sunshine for many days, and on this particular Thursday morning the rain chose to come down in a fine and persistent Scotch mist, which is said to be more insidious than the heaviest shower. For my own part, if I were out unaccompanied by an umbrella, I confess that I should prefer the Scotch mist to the proverbial good old English "cats and dogs." But it was depressing and provoking. It had rained nearly all the summer. Did it intend to rain all through the next month? If so, better remain at home and endure the ills we knew of, as Shakespeare says; for we cannot do wrong in following his advice. Rain day after day at sea is one of those ills that give rise to suicidal tendencies.

To begin with, we were rather late in starting. This was possibly due to the aforementioned depression, which lowers one's principle of action; but more probably due to the innumerable small obstructions which rise up at the last moment, causing one for at least the sixth time to unstrap and reopen one's luggage, with a growing irritability that at last verges upon dementia.

"Where to, sir?" said the head porter of the Hotel Métropole, where we had been staying for a few days, in sight and sound of the classical old Thames on one side and the lions of Trafalgar Square on the other.

"Liverpool Street," was the reply, almost inaudible from exhaustion and suppressed rage.

"What! For the P. and O. steamer? Sharp work, that, sir! You are at least twenty-five minutes late in starting."

"But I suppose we shall do it?"

"Depends on the traffic, sir."

The consequence of this gratuitous alarm was to induce a constant urging of the fiery, untamed steed upon which our fate now depended. This of course also raised a feverish commotion in our bosoms, which Dickens has well and wisely called "an unnecessary wear and tear of the nervous system."

When we reached Liverpool Street we had twenty minutes to spare: and we felt that the head porter of the Métropole was henceforth our deadly enemy.

There was a good deal of stir and bustle at Liverpool Street Station. At the Confusion of Tongues, when the Tower of Babel came to grief, everyone called for his sack. At Liverpool Street this morning everyone seemed to be calling for his lost baggage and to be wildly hunting for it: finding it at last in the hands of a dreamy porter, and receiving the usual exasperating formula: "I was looking for you, sir!" In other words, they were having a game at hide and seek. The ordinary Englishman is undoubtedly a curious mixture of contradictions. Phlegmatic under the usual conditions of every-day life, he grows agitated and impulsive when the eyes of the world are upon him, when calmness is most needed and would be most likely to bring him to his desired end.

The special train was at length packed, bag and baggage. Apparently, nothing was left behind. No last passenger was seen wildly rushing down the platform. No frantic or flying umbrellas anywhere. Away we went.

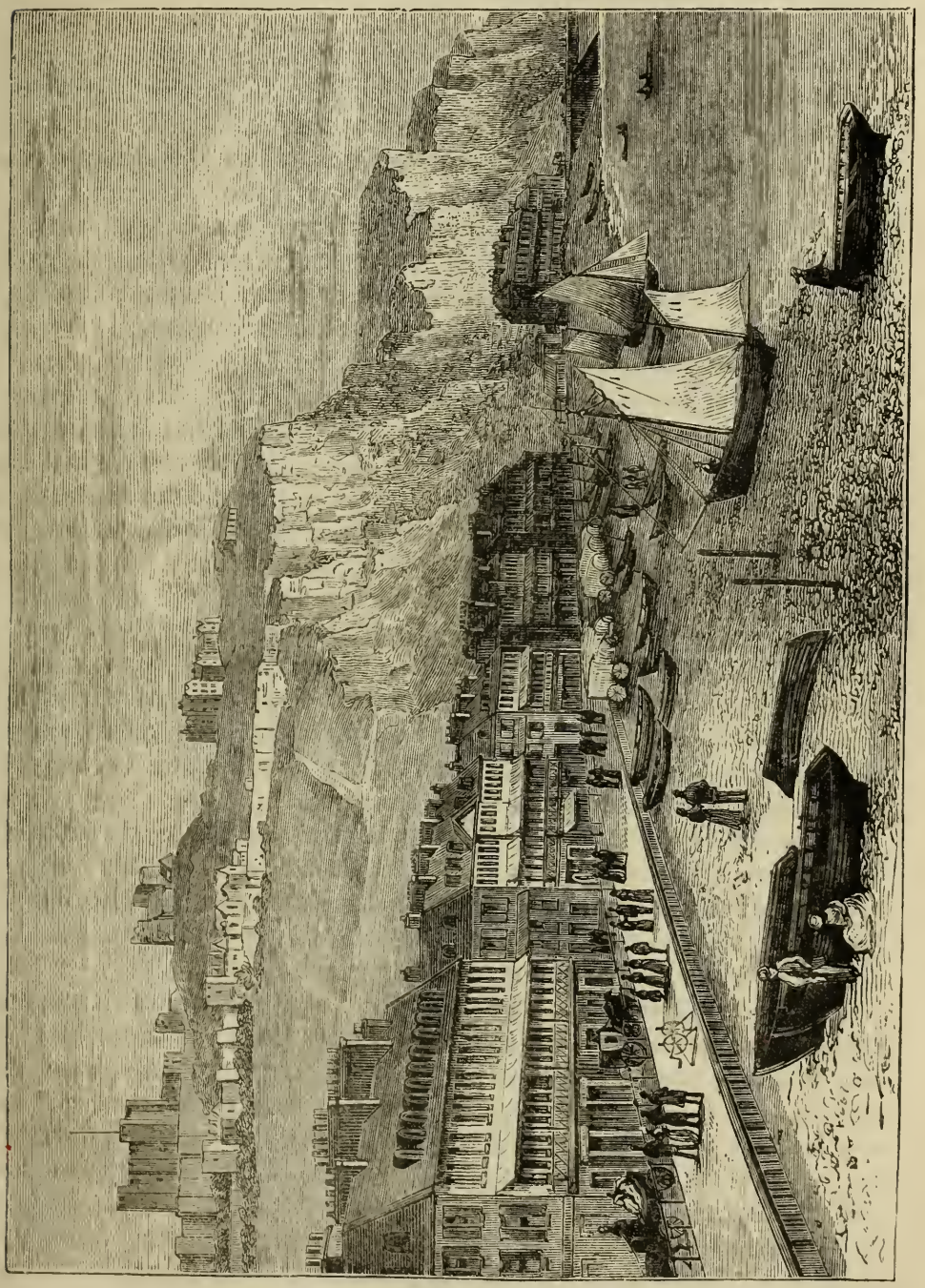
"Good-bye to England for the present, and thank goodness!" cried Mauleverer, as he sank back amongst the soft cushions of his seat: and I extinguished myself in the opposite corner. "I think that Métropole porter ought to be docked of his gold lace and brass buttons for giving to ourselves an unnecessary chase and to cabby a double fare."

"My dear Mauleverer, he was no doubt right in the main," I returned sententiously. "We came through the City, for a wonder, without obstruction. You must have noticed that on these occasions the chief thoroughfare is generally up; or your horse goes down; or two omnibuses have 'collided' in front of you, and you are forced into an extra round of two miles to get out of their way and get back into your own."

"At any rate, all's well that ends well," laughed Mauleverer. "If these clouds will only clear and blue skies smile upon us, our happiness will be complete. The longest lane has a turning, and it cannot rain for ever."

We were going down Channel, through the Bay, and down the Mediterranean for the sake of the sea voyage and its bracing properties. Mauleverer, who leads a lazy life and does nothing but kill time with pleasure from January to December, knows nothing of

those mysterious words "nervous exhaustion," "mental depression," and the long catalogue of evils which follow in their train. I, on the contrary, had reached a point when my best friends looked



DOVER.

solemn, and like all best friends, enlivened me by suggestions of a speedy dissolution, whilst my more facetious acquaintances recommended me an excellent undertaker and invited themselves to my funeral.

There were other friends who declared that it was madness to go down the Mediterranean at that time of the year for bracing purposes. The heat would be intense and enervating. But having had no summer in England, we felt that any amount of heat in the Mediterranean would be an agreeable change after our wintry summer.

Thus it happened that in spite of clouds and rain, in spite of fifty adverse opinions, in spite of the porter at the Métropole, we found ourselves steaming towards the Albert Dock, where the *Batavia* was lying in wait for her passengers.

Before long the train drew up and discharged her freight in every stage and condition of ulsters, waterproofs and hand-baggage. The ladies, of course, as usual looked frights with poke-hats and peaked-hoods, and dress-improvers all out of shape, and skirts lop-sided. This is the ordinary condition of the Englishwoman abroad. Passing through the shed, there lay the good ship *Batavia*, immediately in front of us. Next to her lay the *Bulbul*, and she was to start about ten minutes before we did. The *Batavia* was on her way to Australia, and passengers by her for India would have to change at Aden. The *Bulbul* was proceeding direct to India, calling at Marseilles on her way. The *Batavia*, on the contrary, would pass by Marseilles, but touched at Gibraltar and Malta.

I don't know whether the *Bulbul* was a syren in the boat world, as the nightingale is amongst the birds of the air. If so, she lured her passengers by a song as false as that of those other syrens of the Mediterranean of mythological fame. Had her passengers known the fate that was in store for them, they would have been proof against the sweetest strains of the charmer.

We had taken our berths somewhat late in the day, and our cabin proved small and uncomfortable. So that when Mr. Pateman the manager of the passenger department came on board (to whose kindness and courtesy we owe an eternal debt of gratitude), we asked if it were possible to be shifted to better quarters.

The ship was very full, was the reply, but there was a large and comfortable cabin near the screw, if we cared to risk it. As we could have it to ourselves, we risked it without hesitation, and did well. The screw, for a wonder, never proved objectionable; nor was I ever on board so steady a vessel. The tremulous motion, one of the most trying and disagreeable features in a steamer, was conspicuous by its absence.

The vessel before starting was of course a scene of scrambling and confusion. Saloons and decks were crowded. But fortunately three-fourths of the people on board were only there to see their friends safely off English ground, and to give themselves an opportunity of indulging in the "luxury of pain." One sad "good-bye" in private is not enough. There must be a hundred in public. When the signal came for the shore, the clearance was "grateful and com-

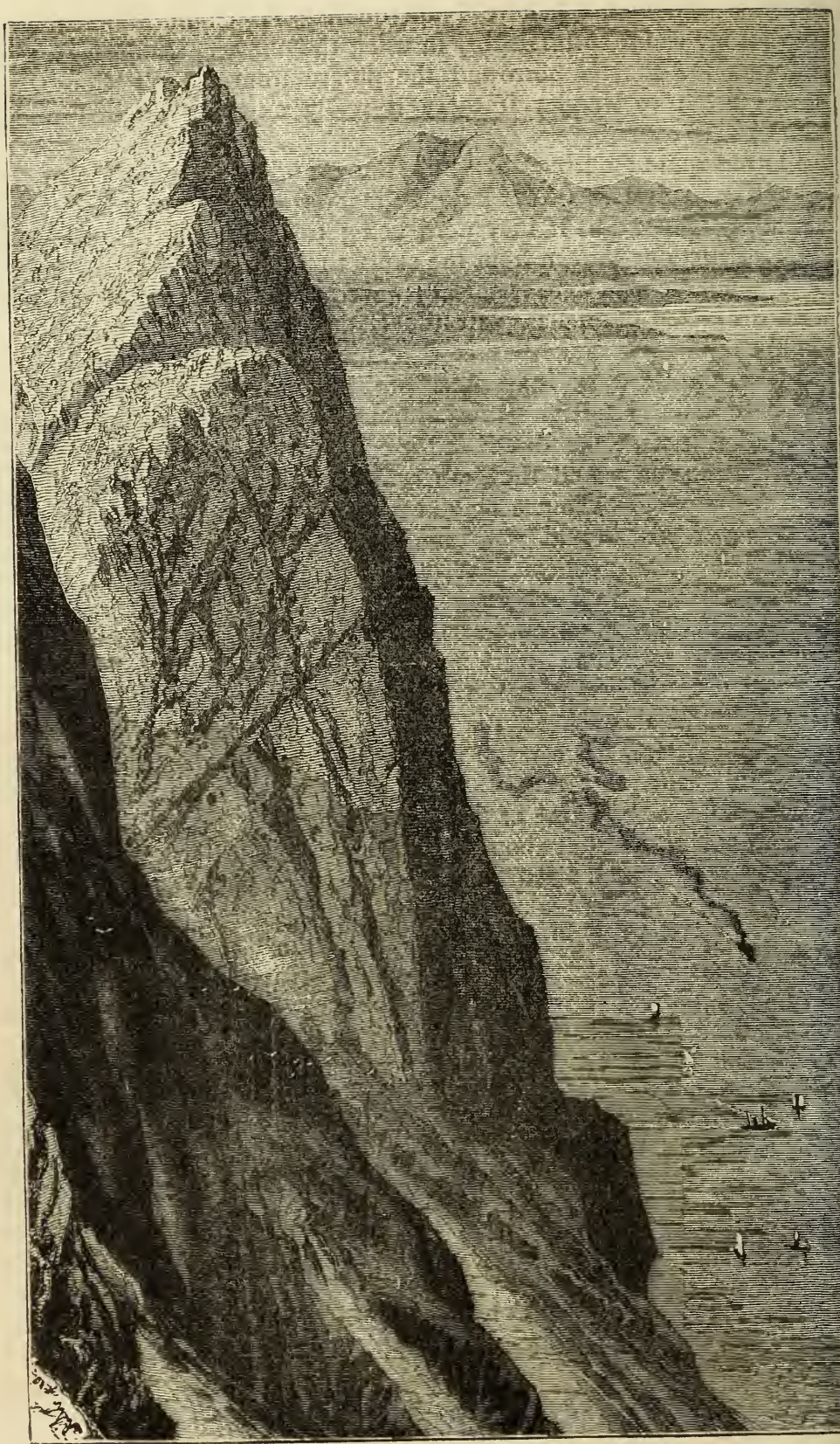
forting"—though I believe I am quoting H. C. in Majorca, and cannot lay claim to originality in using the phrase. And H. C. now informs me that *he* borrowed the phrase from Epps's Cocoa, so that I begin to wonder if there is really anything original under the sun.

It was quite amusing to watch the crowd as it went down the gangway. Hysterical females were made to "walk the plank," and certainly behaved as if they were going to execution. There were last instructions thrown from the shore to the vessel and *vice versâ*, and handkerchiefs were frantically waved from the points of elevated and distracted umbrellas. At the last moment a lady rushed up frantically with a huge basket of grapes for "dear Tom;" but we had left the side, and it appeared probable that "dear Tom" would have to sail for foreign parts without his dessert. Then someone suggested that at the dock-head it could be taken on board, and for an hour the lady and the grapes followed the stream of fluttering and flying people who accompanied the *Batavia* until she passed out into wider waters and was seen no more. But the grapes were on board. The gentleman at once became "dear Tom" to everyone in the ship. He bore a very singular appearance, and went about the decks in trousers that looked exactly like bolsters well stuffed with feathers. Every few minutes, and for no earthly reason, he would burst into a broad and very singular grin generally bestowed upon the sea or the clouds. Altogether he was of the height, build and appearance of an amiable Dutchman, and whilst to some he was "dear Tom," to others he answered quite naturally and very readily to the name of Mr. Vanslyperkin.

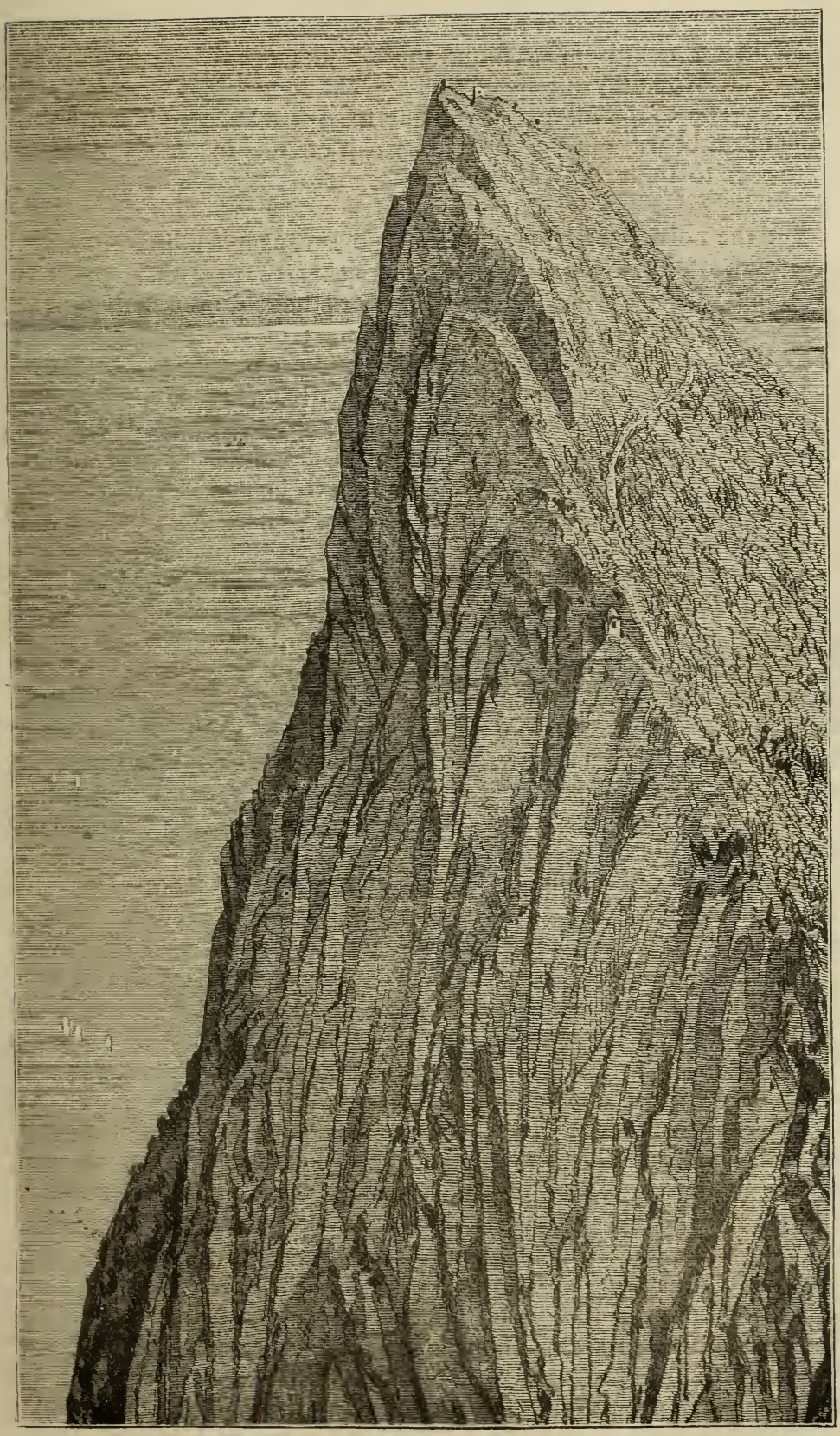
The *Bulbul* had left about twenty minutes before us. But she had had time to get well ahead and we never overtook her. Fortunately neither did we overtake her fate.

One happy sign had come to us. No sooner had we set foot on board than the rain ceased. We accepted it in a spirit of optimism, and once more did well. We scarcely saw rain again, or even a cloud, until we returned to England.

Having satisfactorily settled our sleeping quarters, the next thing was to choose our places in the saloon. In this we were equally fortunate: so much so that it seemed as if inspiration, not accident, had guided us. There were two long tables in the centre and four small ones on either side. We chose one of the small ones, and our party of six found only one thing to regret: that the day must come when we should be scattered and each one go his separate way. One of our sextett was a judge, and by his varied experiences of human nature, his fund of anecdote, his intellectual conversation, he charmed away the hours: whilst his inexhaustible store of dry humour kept us from first to last in convulsions of laughter: laughter that was almost of as much physical advantage to us as the voyage itself.



PEAK OF GIBRALTAR—FACING SPAIN.



PEAK OF GIBRALTAR—FACING AFRICA.

As the days went on, we found more and more reason to congratulate ourselves with our small table. The long tables were full and noisy. The *Batavia* was going out to Australia, and the human element on board was more varied than it often is in vessels proceeding direct to India. The social atmosphere was more colonial than imperial.

Yet the noisiest party, I am bound to say, as a truthful historian, consisted of sundry officers proceeding eastward, who appeared to think that they were not there for their own entertainment alone, but for the edification of the rest of the passengers. If loud laughter (at the dinner-table) is said to proclaim the vacant mind, their minds must have been singularly empty. Towards the end of dinner, they invariably began sleight-of-hand tricks—such as throwing up an apple, and catching it on an inverted bottle, or the prongs of a fork; varied by two apples thrown up and cleverly caught, one on each object. I wish to be impartial, and admit that it was very clever. At length one lady suggested that the time for these exhibitions was a little ill-chosen; why not give separate and evening séances; and she was quite sure that, if they sent round the hat at the end, everyone would be happy to contribute. However, the hint was not taken; the little harmless sarcasm fell dead; and the noise and the conjuring went on.

So also did a flirtation on board with two young ladies who were fellow passengers, and so far scandalised the married ladies that they consulted as to whether they should sign a round robin, requesting an improved behaviour. But it was not done, and the flirting, like the conjuring, held sway.

One young lady, going out to Australia in charge of a man-servant and two maids, gave herself languishing airs and graceful attitudes: very harmless and innocent, and very amusing. We were, however, in a very slight degree, her victims. We were almost the only two on board who used campstools. Most of the passengers, bound for Australia, had their own particular chairs with them. We had not; and one of our campstools invariably disappeared to be brought into requisition for the lady's four o'clock tea, which was always brought on deck by her man-servant, Pompey, on a silver-gilt waiter, and served in cups of delicate Sèvres china. At last we had to turn ourselves into human snails, and, wherever we went, took, not our shells, but our campstools with us.

One unfortunate chair, belonging to a passenger who was to join at Brindisi, long before Brindisi or even Malta was reached, had been so roughly handled that it lay about the deck in fragments. This would prove hard lines for its owner; for I never was on board any vessel so badly provided with seats. It had absolutely nothing but campstools for those unfortunate people who had not brought their own lounges with them; and even the stools were few in number.

In the first days, when our own campstool was surreptitiously impounded for the support of the silver waiter and the edification of its fair owner (who lay on her deck-chair enveloped in opossum rugs, enshrined in Eastern perfumes and costly furs), we had the hardest work in the world to find another, and often could not do so, until our obliging bedroom steward had boldly committed a raid upon some cabin where a chance stool happened to be in hiding.

This want of seats was the only fault to be found with a vessel that was in every other way to be commended. The officers were pleasant and agreeable; the purser was quiet and gentlemanlike; the doctor was no doubt skilful, though, fortunately, we never had to put his skill to the test. But he had a habit of laughing with a sound that exactly resembled the clucking of a hen announcing her accouchement—as George Eliot has it. However, we most of us have our little peculiarities; individualities of manner and temperament: and I don't know what we should do for fresh eggs if our hens gave up the habit of clucking; for if they ceased to charm our ravished ears with the one, they would, no doubt, discontinue to supply us with the other.

In going down Channel, the weather was cold, but calm. Our last vision on the first night was the outlines of Dover Castle on its green slopes, the white cliffs of old England stretching on either side. Just as we passed, the two electric lights flashed out in the twilight with brilliant effect, and all the lights of the town and terraces began to shine out like stars of lesser magnitude. It was almost our last glimpse of the English coast.

The good ship went on her way and in due time passed into the Bay of Biscay, where the usual thing happened; except that, for the Bay, it was by no means tempestuous. Still the rolls were pronounced, and only those who had their sea legs on could attempt to pace the decks with anything like dignity and an affectation of sobriety. Most of the ladies grew pale, and many of them disappeared. Those who bravely remained on deck had their meals brought up to them, and thus managed, in some way or other, to live through the rolling hours.

One day it was rough enough to have the "fiddles" upon the tables, but in spite of them, of course it was nothing but a scene of laughter, accidents and confusion. Bottles of wine were overturned, glasses of claret were emptied into your neighbour's soup-plate, or, worse still, for ever damaged his nether garments; whilst, every now and then, a lurch, deeper than any that had gone before, caused the passengers to cling to each other as if each were to the other what the last straw is said to be to a drowning man.

But long before we had left the Bay of Biscay, we had said good-bye to cold weather and gloomy skies.

As we went on and on, it grew deliciously warm. Air and sea seemed full of sunshine; a rainbow-tinted atmosphere. The skies

were cloudless. It was the perfection of enjoyment. Even the very rolls were exhilarating. We saw very little life upon the waters; much more indeed *in* the waters than upon them. For every now and then we fell in with a shoal of porpoises, which seemed to enter themselves for a race with us, and had no difficulty in winning. They frisked and gambolled, and darted out of the water and darted in again according to their habit; sometimes plunging in on one side the vessel and coming up on the other, as if—like the lively porters at Liverpool Street—they were having a game at hide and seek.

But how far were we from these London influences! In what a different state of existence! This was a new world; the old had passed away. We refused to dwell upon it. On revient à ses premières amours, and we must some day return to atmospheres that certainly were not rainbow-tinted; but for the present they were forgotten.

We saw nothing of the Portuguese coast; nothing beyond every now and then a faint and distant outline. It had been very different once before, when cruising down with the majestic Squadron from Arosa Bay. Then we had sailed quite in-shore, and could note and admire all the separate objects upon the land. The entrance to Oporto; Cintra, with its romantic associations; olive yards upon the slopes; the white, glistening sand upon the sea-shore; the wavy undulations which so clearly cut the deep blue sky behind them.

On the present occasion we missed all this. The *Batavia* kept on her straight course, steering direct for Gibraltar. We saw little or nothing of land, and it was only on rare occasions that we passed a homeward-bound vessel or a ship in full sail. Even the white-winged boats that we had seen in such numbers on the aforesaid cruise, flitting about the waters of the bay like birds of another world with huge wings spread, were now conspicuous by their absence. We saw none of them. On the Sunday night, when darkness had long fallen, we passed an immense steamer bound for England. She was a curious and picturesque object. In the darkness her form was very faintly outlined, and she looked like a small, floating town: whilst her innumerable lights—they really seemed countless—gave her the appearance of a great moving cathedral lighted up for evening service. We only wanted the strains of an organ and the song of a multitude to complete the illusion.

When the next day dawned, we felt it was to be more eventful than our days had lately been. The expression on everyone's face had changed from placidity to mild excitement. Before six o'clock Gibraltar would be reached. We were once more in perfectly calm waters; the rolls had disappeared. For some at Gibraltar the voyage would be over: and, alas, for two at our special table. We should henceforth be reduced to a quartette, but a very happy one, nevertheless.

Catalan Bay, Gibraltar.

The day went on to evening, and when we went down to dinner, the hilly country surrounding Gibraltar was lying about us. Gibraltar itself was not in sight. It is hidden round a point of land, and when you first see it you are almost upon it: within, perhaps, an hour's steaming. It is so generally the case that the most interesting part of a voyage happens at the luncheon or dinner hour.

And a first view of Gibraltar is most interesting and imposing. You feel that it is an impregnable stronghold, and remember, with some degree of pride, that it belongs to England. It really takes somewhat the form of a sleeping lion, as if from the first its destiny in the history of nations had been decided.

When we went up on deck, it was in full view. We were rapidly approaching it. With what different emotions I had last seen the rock! Then we were advancing in all the pomp and dignity of the Reserve Squadron. Now we were in the quietness and humility of a P. and O. steamer.

Moreover, we should really see nothing of all its grand points. Mauleverer, who had never happened to land there, but had posted himself up for the occasion, was full of the caves and galleries; of the Romance of O'Hara's Tower at the summit of its giddy and conical height; of the terrific and perpendicular peaks showing a bold, impregnable front to Spain on the one side and Africa on the other: on the one hand beholding the hill known as the Queen of Spain's Chair, because the wife of Philip V. sat there to see the Spanish troops retake the fortress—and sat in vain; on the other hand the African range, with Mount Atlas snow crowned in their midst. He wanted to claim acquaintance with the wonderful ride to the cork woods, and the charming views and winding beauties of Windmill Hill-road, where you catch lovely glimpses of the town of Gibraltar sleeping below in its furnace-like atmosphere, the calm, deep blue waters of the bay separating it from the fair Andalusian hills beyond. He knew of the little fishing settlement of Catalan Bay, whose inhabitants are descended from an Italian crew shipwrecked here in days gone by; and who in consequence speak a language that is neither Spanish nor Italian, but a mixture of both. He wished to climb the Old Mole, or Devil's Tongue, as it is called, though I have vainly endeavoured to trace the origin of the curious title. Above all, the summit of his ambition was Jacob's Ladder and the Signal Tower, with its mysterious and inexhaustible supplies of Shandy Gaff: that Tower, which commands the wide waters of the Mediterranean on the one side, and those of the Bay of Biscay on the other.

All these I had seen on a former visit, and Mauleverer wished to become as wise as I; but the fates were against him, and he saw none of them. It was galling to think that the monkeys might be there in full array, scrambling and chattering about the rocks, playing at hide and seek, visible to anyone who had cat's eyes and the time

to interview them. We had neither, and so I tried to persuade him that he was not losing much. But he looked hard of conviction, though sufficiently resigned. We all submit to what must be. As Butler says, human nature wonderfully accepts the irremediable. If it were not for that, where should we most of us be, and how should we bear the pains and penalties of life?

We had dropped anchor in the Bay of Gibraltar. It was tolerably lively with shipping, and many a mast-head could be seen in the harbour round the peak of the rock. Others were lying about the waters. Small boats innumerable; Spanish coasting steamers—those purgatories of the Mediterranean; suspicious faluchas with their lateen sails; Spanish Guarda Costas, or revenue cutters, who find it very hard work indeed to guard against smuggling and contraband practices, and keep the high seas pure and honest.

No sooner had we dropped anchor, with this lively scene before us, than we were immediately surrounded by boats, and boarded by a crowd of people who had everything to sell; from Morocco slippers to Damascene daggers. The decks in a short time presented the appearance of a kaleidoscope. One curious and clever trait of these vendors is the unblushing manner in which they will ask you five times as much as they intend to take, and then demand "something for themselves," as they have let you have the article in question at cost price. But this is even more evident in Malta than at Gibraltar.

We were to have very little time on shore. It was six o'clock, and the steamer started again punctually at ten. There would be no chance of climbing to the top of the rock, where Broadley and I had once saved our lives with shandy-gaff, just after they had illuminated the caves with blue light for the Duke of Edinburgh—and we had missed the grand sight. Mauleverer was very anxious to see the monkeys, for which, being slightly mischievous himself, he seemed to have a fellow feeling. Of historical renown, too, and dating back to the days of the Deluge—or before—it is everyone's duty to make the acquaintance of these celebrated animals when occasion offers itself. But to-night there was not the slightest chance of their holding a levée. They are as capricious as the wind. It would be dark, too, for the sun was declining, and would soon set, and darkness here descends without twilight.

Perhaps what I most regretted was the fact that the market would be closed, and we should lose the feast of green figs and all the luscious fruits we had found in Gibraltar before, and received almost for the trouble of carrying away. The very sight of the richly-laden stalls was sufficient, as a thing of beauty, to remain in one's memory for ever. To-night all would be closed. Our head-steward, however, catered well for us, and day after day, on our way to Malta, we fared sumptuously upon rich muscats of Alexandria—the most delicious grapes in the world, surpassing even the sweetwater grapes of Majorca.

We landed in a small boat, humbly, quietly. No royal salute, no clashing of bells. The place had not altered in the least. It would be difficult for Gibraltar to change its appearance. In one sense of the word, it may emphatically be said that there is no room for improvement. An earthquake might rend the rock asunder, reduce the fortifications to ashes, and devastate the Alameda; but nothing short of a convulsion of nature can alter the aspect of this Pillar of Hercules.

The very shops were unaltered, and seemed to display the very same wares as of old. It was just as if they had been to sleep for six years, and wakened up again. We went into most of them for the sake of renewing old impressions, and the owners all declared they knew me again perfectly. It is astonishing how habit becomes second nature, and people will tell stories with every appearance of truth.

Yet they ought to have remembered me, if only out of gratitude, as being one of those who had bought up the whole town, whereby they had made sufficient to retire comfortably upon for the next five years at least. To-night we had at least one consolation—there was nothing new to tempt us. Fashions do not seem to change in this part of the world. They are not like the Paris windows, with their *confections de nouveautés* to allure the weak and unwary. A hundred years hence, as far as one can judge, when he who writes and you who read these lines will have passed into realms where the centuries are not, the shops of Gibraltar will look exactly as they look now, and the third and fourth generation will probably have inherited all the characteristics of the present, even to the happy faculty of drawing facts from their imagination.

Mauleverer was much amused at an announcement over a chemist's shop of "Economical Druggist;" for if there is one thing above others in which economy ought not to be studied, it surely is in the taking of physic: of which, nevertheless, it is said people take a great deal too much. Total abstinence here is probably better even than moderation, though in the matter of strong waters and the fermented grape juice moderation is the greater virtue. A certain cook of our parental home, who had lived seven years with the celebrated Dr. Cockroach, was wont to tell us that never during that period of servitude was a single box of his world-famed boluses ever seen to enter the house. Of course, it might possibly have been only another exemplification of the old truth that a prophet has no honour in his own country. It is so generally the fact that we believe either too much or too little in ourselves.

It was a short visit, yet a sad one, this evening visit to Gibraltar. However happy present circumstances and surroundings may be there must inevitably be an element of intense sadness in all things and events that remind one of the past, and suggest comparisons with bygone days. They are chapters closed in our lives. They

THE OLD MOLE, GIBRALTAR.

have passed away for ever, just as youth passes, and ends our first and happiest volume, though, perchance, in Heaven's mercy, it may not be our best.

To-night we trod in our old footsteps, and their echoes were full of melancholy. We went up into our old rooms at the Royal, and they were haunted by visions of a hundred happy faces, now scattered in all quarters of the globe. Not a few, indeed, had passed away to that goal whence there is no returning, though all had been young and only six years had rolled on in the stream of time.

"What are you looking for, sir?" asked a servant, as we wandered from one room to another. And when we answered that we were looking up old lost friends and renewing old recollections, he suggested that perhaps they had only gone out for a walk and would be in presently.

No, never again. Even if we all found ourselves there once more, under exactly the same circumstances, still all would be as different from those days as light from darkness. The pleasures would have been anticipated, and anticipation is the sting and marplot of all enjoyment. The more intensely longed for, the greater the disappointment. It is from our unexpected pleasures that our greatest happiness is drawn.

Then again, it is in the very essence of our human nature to clothe our past in a halo of bliss and romance, that certainly did not exist in the intensity we now give to it. Imagination runs riot when dwelling both on the past or the future. It is given to few to live intensely the life of the present. But those who do so live their lives twice over: a double portion is theirs.

To-night, Gibraltar looked very deserted. The arrival of the *Batavia* raised no internal commotion. Even the bosoms of the shopkeepers beat with no ardent expectations. The rock above us loomed out terrifically great and portentous in the darkness. The outline of the sleeping lion could be traced against the background of the still darker sky. Light twinkled here and there upon its surface like stars in a new firmament. Those other far-off stars in the heaven of heavens were bright and scintillating and large and glorious, according to the fashion of the southern skies.

One felt in the very centre of a military station. There were gates and points and drawbridges, and sentries innumerable. There were many barracks, and every now and then a bugle call sounded upon the air. The martial atmosphere was somewhat heavy and terrific, and the word DISCIPLINE seemed to flash from every bayonet. One felt here under strict surveillance, and it was slightly depressing.

The long, straggling street, ending in the market place and more barracks, was comparatively deserted.

Beyond lies the road leading to Spain and that long range of hills possessing the Queen's chair; and a very hard and uncomfortable seat her Majesty must have found it. And yet beyond that,

the wonderful ride that takes you to Ronda and Malaga, and the matchless, far-famed Alhambra—a legacy from those Arabian Night magicians, the Moors. And yet beyond, the outer world; and, after leaving the Alhambra, you will think it altogether another world.

We entered a church where a service was going on. It was evidently not a fashionable service, for the small congregation was of the poorest. The altar was lighted up, and threw the surrounding building into greater gloom. There were no fair Andalusians here, to send one into the seventh heaven of admiration with their drooping figures and graceful outlines. We were not in Majorca, and H. C. was not with me to look languishing, and sigh away his best emotions in poetry. The fair Mallorquinas were quite too much for him. He raves about them to this hour. Mauleverer was not at all poetical, and if he was in any way stricken with the fever, to which we all more or less have to pay our tribute, he kept it to himself. But these were early days. We had much before us: experiences and vicissitudes probably of various kinds.

The heat was intense. When we landed, the lowering sun seemed to throw its full force upon the rock: which sent back its rays remorselessly upon the town. The streets were suffocating. During the whole time we felt in a Turkish bath. The only sensible things we saw in the shop windows, the only things that tempted us, were the fans, on which Chinese ladies were making perpetual curtsies, and evidently offering very pronounced love to unresponsive Chinese gentlemen. Perhaps it is always leap-year in China, and the custom for ladies there to make the first advances. And if it were not occasionally also the custom in England (we whisper this under the rose) how many matrimonial partnerships now existing would have no place in future history? In the days of our first parents, the women took the initiative, and human nature is probably the same in its broad outlines, even after the lapse of six thousand years. Only these fair syrens have gained in tact. They lead, whilst all the time they pretend to be following.

Now and then we came across some fellow-passengers, wandering about in the darkness like ghosts without an object in view: and no doubt thinking Gibraltar a very deadly-lively place. Many of them we could see in the shops as we passed them, standing out under the glare of the lamps. We felt a pity for them, that no doubt was wasted, as we noticed flushed faces endeavouring to choose from an embarrassment of riches. We had all gone through it six years ago, only that then we did not choose and discriminate: we bought up everything wholesale, rashly, recklessly. To-night we were six years older and wiser.

Looming down upon us, we once caught sight of one of the lieutenants in close, very close, proximity to one of the fair and frail and fickle Goddesses of Flirting on board the *Batavia*. As they passed us, she was looking coyly up into his eyes, he was looking

deceitfully down into hers. We heard him murmur: "Angelina, I could not live without you. I could never bid you farewell." And yet, before we reached Malta, it was evident that this Edwin and Angelina had had a violent quarrel, and parted for ever. Of such stuff are lovers made of—on board ship.

Our moments in Gibraltar were drawing to a close. We went on to the Alameda, that walk where all the rank and fashion of the settlement most do congregate. To-night it was deserted—at the present moment. At half-past nine the band was to play, and then, probably, in the cool of the evening, the only endurable time here, its inhabitants would come out like the owls and pace up and down under the dark sky, in sound of the restless sea. But then the owls are birds of wisdom, and may be trusted with latch-keys.

It was very dark to-night. For the moment we had it to ourselves. Lights gleamed here and there upon the waters. Our own good ship looked as if prepared for an illumination; her electric lights standing out with great effect. All about us were the hills and undulations of fair Andalusia, but we could not trace their faintest outlines. Out there, across the water, was Tangiers, where I had once saved two friends from an agonising death through excesses in lemon tea. They were grateful enough *then*, but like human nature they deny it *now*, and declare that it was nothing but the abominable atmosphere of the place.

It all came back to me to-night very vividly, as I sat there looking over the dark waters. I could have vowed that I traced before me the outlines of the fleet: and that six hours, not six years, had struck upon the gong of time since I was last there. But the fleet was not before me. It was only ghosts that I saw; the same sort of ghosts that had just now haunted the rooms of the Royal, when the waiter had suggested they had all gone out for a walk.

They were ghosts of the imagination—like many other of the ghosts of the world. Though I would not for a moment say there are not and never have been any ghosts at all. Dr. Johnson was a wiser man than I, and he declared in favour of ghosts. I would not presume to contradict Dr. Johnson. If he were here I know that I should get the worst of it, and as he is not here, I will not take a mean advantage. So I beg to vote for Dr. Johnson—and the ghosts.

Nine o'clock had struck some time, and Mauleverer suggested that unless we wished to prolong our stay at Gibraltar ad infinitum, it was time to make for the *Batavia*.

I believe that I should have dreamed on until midnight had I been alone—and awakened to destitution. Fortunately, as I have already said, Mauleverer was not poetical. He never indulges in dreams and visions. He has little imagination. He is one of those happy men who live in the present, and never trouble themselves about the past and the future. He has a strong nervous system well under control. Southern nights and starry firmaments, and a full

Windmill Hill Road,
Gibraltar,
Leading to the Heights.

moon, round as a shield and bright as silver—he accepts all these things from their practical, not their romantic side. No doubt he does well. He loses the delights of your highly-wrought temperaments, but he escapes all the pain.

So we left the Alameda to its solitude, and turning to the left, were presently stopped by a portcullis, where sentries were on the qui-vive. "Qui va là?" cried one, in stern, regimental tones—as if Gibraltar had been under siege, and we the advance of the enemy. Or rather, "Who goes there?" he said, in plain, unmistakable English. "Friend," we replied. "For the *Batavia*, sir? Pass on."

And the gates were opened, and we went through and were free. A moment before we had felt very like prisoners.

At the landing-stage we found the very boat that had brought us on shore, and singularly enough, the very same passengers who had come ashore with us, including the good and admirable parson. They were all armed with bags of grapes, and declared they should remember Gibraltar for these, if for nothing else. So that I suppose the road to an Englishman's memory is the same as the road to his heart.

We struck out for the *Batavia*, and were soon once more on board. The decks were still strewed with merchandise, for these persistent hawkers never give up hope until the very last moment. There were barges alongside taking in cargo for the ports at which the *Batavia* would touch, and the second steward was taking in a stock of provisions that looked a sufficient supply for another deluge. The passengers, more or less excited, were comparing notes and purchases. Edwin and Angelina were invisible.

Everyone was on board. All the cargo was stowed away. The merchants with their frivolous temptations had cleared the decks, and taken themselves off. The band on the Alameda was now in full play. Its strains came floating across the waters. If there was no Royal salute for us this time, no clashing of bells, at least we departed to the strains of music. We pictured the crowd on the promenade that we could not see, some of our late fellow passengers amongst them. They no doubt probably were sympathising with us as they watched our departure for the uncertainties of winds and waves. We pitied them in their deadly-lively, suffocating quarters, cabined, cribbed, confined. Yet, no doubt, each might have spared his compassion. There is so much wasted in this world; sympathy, love, wealth, words. If all were well applied, there would be such an abundance of everything.

But we did not dream or moralise to-night. We settled ourselves in a favourite nook of the wheel box (which a lady once mistook for a grand piano), and our excellent little saloon steward brought us up refreshments. If pleasure and pain go hand in hand through the world, so it seems to me do romance and reality, the sublime and the ridiculous. Sherry and seltzer and sandwiches mixed up with stars

and flashing constellations and martial strains that came wafted across the dark waters!

But it is always so. In the midst of a sublime opera one night, a sudden pause following a tremendous crash, and the Romeo and Juliet of the piece were clasped in each other's arms—looking very ridiculous and improper, I admit—in that awful pause there came distinctly breathed from a box in loud tones: "Roast mutton with onion sauce is my favourite dish!"

We looked. The speaker was a lady: young, fair, refined-looking. But after that confession, her charms had vanished. Crystallised violets and roast butterflies' wings would have accorded much better with the scene and the speaker. No doubt the favourite beverage was soda and brandy, or even the delights of Bass: but that further confession came when the pause was over and the crash was on again.

Ten o'clock struck upon the air, and before the last knell had ceased to vibrate, the word of command had gone forth and we were steaming on our way to Malta: ploughing the wide waste of waters; watching the stars and the travelling constellations: until it was time for us also to turn in, and from waking thoughts pass into the realms of that dreamless sleep which is an emblem of death.

NEW YEAR'S DAY: A BIRTHDAY.

A NEW year's greeting, with the old year's love,
To her whose love is never old or new:
A new year's blessing, all the old above,
To her who blesses all—dear wife, to you!
Gifts will be yours to celebrate the day
That marks your own sweet advent, and the year's,
Fair gifts that bring you, as the givers pray,
The hope of much delight and end of tears:—
And these among your fairest gifts are mine,
The dearest of all gifts to you and me,
One heart with yours that never knows decline,
One love with yours to all eternity—
Nor new, nor old, in all devotion true,
For ever, and for ever, all for you.

GEORGE COTTERELL.

LATIMER'S NOVEL.

WHEN Fred Latimer elected to give up soldiering and take to literature, his father, a country vicar, called him a simpleton for his pains.

But the old gentleman was a great deal to blame in the matter himself. In past years, when Fred was a boy, had not he been called the genius of the family? Had not those pathetic poems of his, "To the Moon," "Oh, how I long for Death!" "Ode to my Mother mending my Socks," and "Lines Written in Dejection in the Spare Bedroom," been read aloud at the Vicarage tea-table, to the delight of the assembled party? while the boy himself was prevented by the proud throbbing of his heart from making his usual substantial meal of bread-and-butter.

After this early taste of fame, is it in human nature to cut the Muse dead and turn to hum-drum employment? Who that has once been attacked by what Voltaire so happily terms "*la fureur d'écrire*," is likely to become a rational member of society until the malady has run its course?

All through the years during which a military education was being imparted to him, Fred studied tactics with an eye on the Muse the while; and in leisure moments his soul and his fancy overflowed on foolscap in despairing verses and blood-curdling romances. When he became a sub in that band of heroes, the second battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, the divine fire still burnt within him, and ever more fiercely.

"I have a soul above these fellows and their ways!" murmured Fred to himself of his comrades in his quarters in the Shaft Barracks at Dover. "Their incessant promenading in Granville Gardens, and on the sea-front; their eternal billiards, and cigars, and gossip; their everlasting trudging down Snargate Street to look at the pretty girl in the confectioner's! I, whose story in blank verse, 'The Druid's Death-blow,' caused my aunt to fall into convulsions and tear her cap to pieces! I, who have had a romance in three parts printed in the 'Weekly Treasury of Horrible Fiction'! Though, it's true, they refused somewhat rudely to give me any payment for it. Once more, I say, I have a soul above holiday-soldiering in country barracks, and I'm determined to renounce it."

And so, after a couple of years of it, Fred announced his intention of quitting the army, and entering the ranks of, "the mob of gentlemen who write with ease."

"The pen is mightier than the sword!" said Fred, quoting Lytton. "London for me, among the clash of intellects! I'll live on the

allowance my father makes me, until——" And here his fancy soared away to the time, not far distant, when he determined wealth should be his, and, dearer far than wealth, fame!

See Fred, then, having resigned his part in defending his country and come to London to try and live on his small allowance and boundless hopes.

We will touch but lightly on the various vicissitudes through which he passed. Some phases of life, especially the life of a literary beginner, are too deplorable for description to completely unveil.

For a time he was connected, as a general Jack-of-all-work, with a newly-started society-journal, *West End Whispers*, which had already had the honour of figuring in half-a-dozen libel cases. Each member of its small ill-paid staff was supposed to be equal to any literary task —from a society feuilleton to an article on finance; from a sparkling copy of topical verses to an invented scandal in the beau-monde.

Fred worked for them with a will. You might see him down at the office, in the Strand, working away with scissors and paste as if his life depended upon the result; you might see him hovering round well-known milliners' establishments, trying hard to make out a description of the bonnets and mantles in the windows for the weekly gossipy fashion-letter—supposed to come from a Lady of Rank in Paris!

But his masculine ignorance nearly wrecked the paper once, when, in his report upon a wedding in high life, he described the noble young bride as dressed in "white book-muslin made with a jacket-body and a polonaise."

But he worked away manfully and stuck to *West End Whispers*, now in one capacity, now in another: his connection with the paper only terminating when the editor, sub-editor and publisher were all in prison and *West End Whispers* ceased to exist. Then, for a time, our hero worked for the *Illustrated Thriller*, a weekly budget of ghastly fiction, household recipes, stale and ancient jokes, and "Answers to Correspondents."

Here again Fred showed his versatility; one week contributing "The Countess's Crime," a novelette in fifteen spasms with impossible illustrations; the next, telling needy young housewives how to make a delicious pudding out of a few crusts of bread and a little hot water; and the following week undertaking the "Answers to Correspondents," and assuring "Blanche" that "The hair is distinctly auburn, not red;" "Get your father or brother to ask the young man his intentions: we consider it was shabby of him to let you pay for him at the theatre;" "The 3rd of June, 1015, was a Monday," and so on.

Months passed in this way. Fred Latimer, in his London lodgings, worked and gloomed and sighed for the fame and wealth that were so tardy in coming. He was not getting on so well as he had expected. He owned it to himself, though to none besides. His spirits were sinking month by month.

He had written a novel and had trudged round to the publishers with it, and it had been handed back, and handed back, and handed back—a little dirtier and more frayed at the edges each time.

One of these potentates, more affable than his class in general, had condescended to tell poor Latimer: "If you want to please the public of to-day, be realistic. Write of people as they are, not as they ought to be. Or, if you err at all, let it be in making them *worse*, not *better* than they are. Lay bare the human heart by all means, but lay bare its ugly side! Let your hero soliloquise if you wish, but don't let him look at the stars as he does so—let him look at the *earth* and give utterance to the thoughts that are leading him on to crime!"

And Fred, with his novel in his hand, trudged back to his lodgings and mused much upon the words the publisher had let fall.

"Oh, to be famous! Oh, to be famous!" moaned Fred, as he sat in his room, looking mournfully at his rejected novel. But I do not ask pity for him. The plain girl pining for admiration, the mediocre scribbler pining for fame—for these the world has only contemptuous laughter.

"I *must* have fame! I *will* have fame! Horror and crime are the only necessary ingredients of a popular novel, and surely I can supply them!"

Four or five months later than this the newspaper critics began to busy themselves over a new book. The libraries could not supply this book fast enough to their patrons; the travelling public bent over it in express trains, in omnibuses, in tram-cars: fresh, young faces, stern, middle-aged faces, dim, old faces, all seemed to hang over the charmed pages with equal enthralment.

The work was issued by an enterprising firm of publishers in a natty, portable, attractive form, bearing on the title-page, "Wilful Murder: A Realistic Novel. By Frederick Latimer." It was spicily got up, I promise you, the cover being black splashed with blood-red drops, and the initial letter of the opening chapter representing a tiny gallows. The first edition was all sold out within a week; a second was called for and disposed of even faster. Within a month from publication twelve editions were gone, and still the demand increased. The libraries and the booksellers sent their messengers round to the publishers' with the order, "A hundred 'Wilful Murders' at once, please," oftener and yet oftener. The clamour and praise of delight swelled and swelled till the town rang with it.

One critique, which appeared in a leading review, will suffice to give us an outline of the work and an idea of its success:—"The new realistic novel by Mr. F. Latimer, which has literally taken the town by storm, shows, by its enormous success, the direction that the taste of the reading public takes and has taken now for some little time. The readers of to-day do not make great demands on

wit, fancy or eloquence: they do not ask for profound insight into human nature in its entirety: they do not want subtle analysis of character, or humour, or pathos, or brilliant narrative. They have uncrowned the former Kings of Letters: the aristocracy of literature is at an end, and a Republic has followed, in which shilling dreadfuls rule in turns. 'Battle, Murder, and Sudden Death,' in fancy covers, are the pabulum which the reading mind of to-day demands. Readers no longer ask to be amused, touched, or elevated; they simply ask to be horrified! And since this questionable demand has existed, we suppose no such satisfactory supply has answered it as that provided by this new writer in his realistic novel. The work, which to be the more realistic is written throughout in the first person, takes for its subject a recent murder, still quite fresh in the public mind, the mystery surrounding which has hitherto baffled our police authorities. Mr. Latimer, personating the—as yet—undiscovered murderer, tells the story of the crime in a manner which for realism has never yet been equalled. The feelings of the murderer as he makes up his mind to the crime, as he works his will upon his unoffending victim, and as he afterwards disposes of the body, are analysed with a horrible truthfulness and vividness no previous fiction can boast. The book is already in its 80th edition."

And so, from being a poor literary Jack-of-all-trades, behold Fred elevated of a sudden to the topmost pinnacle of the prose Parnassus; and boasting at once a laurelled brow and a heavy purse. No more lodgings in the neighbourhood of the Strand, but apartments in St. James's-street, where a crowd of notes and coroneted invitation-cards strewed his rooms, begging the favour of the popular author's company at dinner, luncheon, or breakfast; at ball, concert, or crush.

And what of Fred himself? Fred, the flattered, the caressed, the suddenly famous and affluent!

Is the *reality* of fame as sweet as fancy painted it in bygone days? Alas, it would appear not! Those laurel-leaves that seemed such blissful wear, now that they are fairly on his thoughtful brow, it is apparent that, in the words of the poet, "the trail of the serpent is over them all."

It is a pale grave face that is presented at the fine houses of the grand folk bent on honouring the new writer—a pale grave face, occasionally lighting up with wild excitement, then again deepening into gloom.

"Your Grace, let me present to you the author of 'Wilful Murder,' Mr. Frederick Latimer;" and a stout duchess, after a gracious inclination, would look at the young author, glass at eye, with a "Very pleased to make your acquaintance—so clever of you to give us such a delightful book! You must come to me on Monday evening; I have a great deal to say to you about that dear book! And what do you think of doing next?"

And yet Fred, though the lion of the season, though besieged

with requests from publishers to name his own terms for a novel, though, in brief, more than realising all his early dreams, was pale, distraught, gloomy.

Fred Latimer had enjoyed his position as leading novelist of the day, the man who best understood what the reading-public wanted, and had given it them for a period of three months and more, when there appeared a certain number of a certain quarterly containing a long notice of "'Wilful Murder,' considered as a type of the modern novel."

Far be it from us to inflict on an innocent reader the piled-up "words, words, words" in which this dryasdust critic expounded his views on modern fiction! With one paragraph alone do we concern ourselves. It was as follows:—"The work has been lauded as the most realistic that has yet appeared; critics have pronounced the *soi-disant* murderer's confession perfectly true to nature, his description of the crime the most real and vivid thing of the kind ever written. We dispute this, and, in face of the opinion of the whole press, boldly pronounce the confession unnatural, and the manner of the crime such as no *bonâ fide* murderer would adopt. When the real criminal concerned in the recent Islington murder, the mystery of which Mr. Latimer undertakes in these pages to solve, is discovered by the Scotland Yard emissaries, his confession will, no doubt, differ very widely from that of the hero of 'Wilful Murder.'"

Fred Latimer read this notice in his handsome rooms. Three months of fame and wealth had apparently not agreed with his health, for he was gaunt and pale and gloomy. Still paler and gloomier was he as he threw down the sheet and laughed a wild, strange, despairing laugh.

"Not natural? not real? not truthful? Fool! And am I not to enjoy to the full what I have paid for so heavily? Is this fool to tarnish my brilliant fame as Realistic Writer *par excellence* by his idiot-maunderings? Can I bear him to go uncontradicted? I cannot! I must not!"

On the following evening, in the gas-lit West End thoroughfares, newsboys with their ear-splitting voices were bawling certain items of "sensation" which brought them customers as fast as they could hand their papers out. "Spe—cial *Echo!* Spe—cial *Standard!* 'Orrible Revelations! Islington Murder! Mystery Explained! Arrest of a POPULAR NOVELIST!"

And the greedy public, buying, read that "Mr. F. Latimer, the author of the immensely popular novel, 'Wilful Murder,' having been greatly incensed by a notice in one of the quarterlies denouncing his work as *un*-real, *un*-truthful, and *un*-everything that had hitherto been its highest praise, had, in a passion of rage and fury of contradiction, sought out the writer of the article, given him the lie, stated that his work *must* be natural, for he had himself

committed the crime so gruesomely described in 'Wilful Murder,' and had been arrested in consequence!"

The Court of Justice, packed to the ceiling with eager spectators, was hushed as death. The judge, black-capped, had just pronounced the doom of the wretched prisoner at the bar.

And now the miserable man in his ghastly calmness confronted the sea of faces turned upon him.

"My lord," he said in hollow tones, looking towards his judge, "I have a few brief words to say." Then to the silent throng before him—"To you," he cried, raising his right arm in solemn accusation, "to you, representing the world I am to leave so soon; to you, representing the public to please whom I perilled soul and body, I say my last earthly words—on your conscience I lay my early and shameful death! I was a writer. I yearned for fame—the fame you give by your favour and applause. And what are the qualities for which you give a writer fame? Do you demand wit, fancy, scholarship, eloquence, noble sentiments, vivid presentments of nature? No; you ask for none of these! You ask for horror and crime described realistically—above all, realistically! In a frenzy, to gain your applause and give you your demand, I have dipped my hands in blood! I have stained my soul and forfeited my life to please the taste of the Reading Public! Behold your work and my reward!"

With his voice raised to a shout, which died away in the murmurs of the crowded audience—Fred awoke.

He was lying in his easy-chair in his quarters at the Shaft Barracks, Dover, with the MS. of a sensational story before him. His frame was quivering, great drops of emotion poured from his brow. For a moment—so vivid had been his dream—he believed that all he had gone through was real. Then, as he recognised that it was *but* a dream—"Is it a warning, I wonder?" he asked himself. Then, again, after a minute or two of musing—"After all, I don't think I'll leave the Service; and for the *present*, at any rate, I'll give up writing 'penny dreadfuls.'"

And he threw his MS. into the fire.

"THE STUFF THAT DREAMS ARE MADE OF."

FROM time immemorial, dreams have been the wonderland of waking hours. Hope and Fear have wrought them into their own fabric. Superstition has seized upon them and worked up a curious ritual of "dreams that go by contraries," of "dreams of the morning light," of dreams with significances, some of which seem natural enough, whilst to a few of those apparently most arbitrary, Science herself has offered a certain amount of explanation.

Dreaming is an experience which may be called common to humanity, though it varies so widely in different individuals that, in a few exceptional cases, it is absolutely unknown. Pliny and Plutarch both refer to such instances. Specialists on nervous disease report having known patients who declared they had never dreamed but once. The writer of this paper has heard a young gentleman of great vivacity and lively fancy declare that he had dreamed so seldom that he had a vivid recollection of every dream he ever had!

Scientific writers assert that "a dream must have a foundation, and this is either impressions made upon the mind at some previous period or produced during sleep by bodily sensations." As an illustration, it is said that "before the discovery of America, no Europeans ever dreamed of American Indians"—an assertion which seems to be too sweeping for scientific proof, and by which nothing can be proved but that such Europeans when awake could not have described such dreams by the name of a race they had never heard of!

Certainly dreams are often made of materials very inadequate to their finished result. Abercrombie relates that during an alarm of a French invasion, in Edinburgh, it had been arranged that the first intimation of the enemy's approach was to be the firing of a gun from the castle. A certain gentleman, a zealous volunteer, retired to bed, dreamed that he heard this gun, went out, and witnessed and joined in the proceeding of the troops. At this juncture, he was awakened by his wife in a great fright, she having had a similar dream. It was ascertained that the falling of a pair of tongs in an upper chamber was the common origin of the dream in two minds already predisposed to the same line of fancy.

Another instance is given of a person sleeping in a room where a flat-iron was allowed to scorch a woollen garment. The sleeper dreamed that the house was burned down, and that she could not escape because all her clothes were destroyed!

A gentleman, who, before retiring to sleep, had been reading a book of picturesque travels, dreamed that he was journeying across

the Rocky Mountains. He was attacked by two Mexicans, and after a gallant fight was taken prisoner. His captors believed him to be the possessor of secret treasure, and in order to make him reveal its whereabouts put him to the torture of stripping his feet and holding them to a fire. Waking with a cry of agony, he discovered that his hot-water bottle had escaped from its flannel swathings, and that the undue heat of his toes had conjured up all the rest of the tragic story!

A French physiologist caused many curious experiments to be made on himself during sleep. These experiments took the form of trifling physical sensations, which produced almost invariably a wonderfully exaggerated effect on the sleeping mind. Thus, a feather tickling the lips was converted into the horrible punishment of a mask of pitch being applied to the face. A bottle of eau de Cologne held to his nose sent him into a dream of a perfumer's shop in Cairo. A pinch on the neck recalled the days of his boyhood and the old family physician applying a blister to that region.

In dreams there is no idea of time. It has been repeatedly proved that a dream which covered the events of years may be lived through in a few minutes; and those people who honestly believe that "they dream all night," probably do so only when on the verge of waking. One authority declares that in a dream "he made a voyage to India, spending several days in Calcutta, continued his journey to Egypt, visited the cataracts and pyramids, and held confidential interviews with Mohammed Ali, Cleopatra, and Saladin, the whole journey apparently occupying several months; but he had slept only an hour.

Scientific writers admit that there is a type of dream in which coming physical disease or disaster is shadowed forth—some bodily sensation, perhaps too slight to be noticed by the subject when awake, yet contriving to impress itself in some symbolic form on the sleeping mind. The more striking instances of this sort may serve to explain how, in some lesser degree, certain symbols are likely to attach themselves to certain painful sensations or conditions, until at last they are finally accepted as mysterious presages of evil.

Conrad Gesner, the eminent naturalist, dreamed that he was bitten on the left side by a venomous serpent. In a short time a severe carbuncle appeared on the very spot, terminating his life in the space of three days. Another scientific man, who dreamed of being bitten by a black cat, also suffered in the same way.

A learned Jesuit, author of many erudite theological works, saw, one night in his sleep, a man laying his hand upon his chest, who announced to him that he would soon die. He was then in perfect health, but was shortly after carried off by a pulmonary disorder.

A lady who had a dream in which she saw all objects dim and obscured as by a mist, was soon after attacked by a disease of the eye, of which that was a symptom.

A dream of a great fire in which the sleeper himself seemed to be

consumed, was followed soon after by an attack of inflammation of the brain. Apoplexy, epilepsy and similar diseases are often preceded by frightful dreams in which the sleeper feels himself scalped by Indians, thrown over precipices, or torn to pieces by wild beasts. Such

> "Miserable nights
> So full of fearful dreams, of ugly sights!"

should be treated as "warnings" in the truest sense of that word—as sent by Nature to foretell impending evils which skill and wisdom may be able to avert.

Thus, if Science has dispelled such old wives' fables as that to dream of a marriage signified a death, or to dream of a cat meant to meet a foe, she has certainly added mysteries and terrors of her own to the subject. One learned man has actually tried to systematise these subtle premonitions—to make them more available for use and guidance. In his opinion—

"Lively dreams are in general a sign of the excitement of nervous action.

"Soft dreams are a sign of slight irritation of the head; often in nervous fevers announcing the approach of a favourable crisis.

"Frightful dreams are a sign of determination of blood to the head.

"Dreams about blood and red objects are signs of inflammatory conditions.

"Dreams of distorted forms are frequently a sign of obstructions and diseases of the liver.

"Dreams in which the patient imagines torture or injury of any limb indicate disease in that limb.

"Dreams about death often precede apoplexy, which is connected with determination of blood to the head."

About some dreams which would come under this category there yet remains an element of mystery, a touch of human and spiritual interest, which does not escape even from their dry narration by the physiologists. Such stories, especially when so told, suggest to any thoughtful mind that though modern science may explain many of the wonders of ancient credulity, yet she does not exhaust the secrets of the universe. We will venture to relate one or two such instances, adding no imaginative colouring to the simple scientific record.

An educated and very sensible lady had been through a rather fatiguing social day. On retiring to bed she soon fell asleep, and presently dreamed that an old man clothed in black approached her, holding out an iron crown apparently of enormous weight. As he drew near she recognised the features of her father, who had been dead for many years. He addressed her thus: "My daughter, during my lifetime I was forced to wear this crown; death relieved me of the burden, but it now descends to you." He placed it on her head and gradually disappeared. Immediately she felt a weight

and tightness about her brow. Further, to add to her torture, the rim of the crown was studded on the inside with sharp points which wounded her forehead so that blood ran down her face. She awoke agitated and excited, but otherwise quite well, and found she had been asleep little more than half an hour. On falling asleep again the dream was repeated, with the additional circumstance that the apparition of her father now reproached her for unwillingness to wear the crown. When she awoke again she found she had been asleep for three hours. Again she returned to bed, and the dream was repeated in broad daylight.

She now arose and made her toilet. Going over the circumstances of her dream, she recollected having heard her father say that during his youth, spent in a distant land, he had been subject to epileptic convulsions consequent on an accident, and that he had been cured by the operation of trephining.

On a sister entering her room, she proceeded to narrate the picturesque vision which had, naturally, made such an impression on her memory. While thus engaged, she suddenly gave a shriek, became unconscious, and fell upon the floor in true epileptic convulsions, though the attack was but a slight one. A week afterwards the dream was repeated, and was followed by another attack. Under suitable treatment both dream and attack ceased to recur.

It is a most singular fact that under certain combined conditions of fatigue, discomfort, and malaria, whole bodies of men—such as companies of soldiers—have been seized by the same terrific dream, and have awakened simultaneously, shrieking with terror. Such an instance is related by Laurent, when, after a forced march, 800 French soldiers were packed in a ruined Calabrian monastery which could ill accommodate half that number. At midnight, frightful cries issued from every corner of the building as frightened men rushed from it, each declaring that it was the abode of the Evil One—that they had seen him, in the form of a big black dog, who threw himself upon their breasts for an instant and then disappeared. The men were persuaded to return to the same shelter on the next night, their officers promising to keep watch beside them. Shortly after midnight the same scene was re-enacted—the same cries, the same flight, as the soldiers rushed forth in a body to escape the suffocating embrace of the black dog. The wakeful officers had seen nothing.

On some future occasion we shall hope to relate some other experiences in dreamland, and more particularly some of those instances in which "the stuff that dreams are made of" has got woven into making human destinies in a weird fashion, towards whose explanation even Science can as yet offer no satisfactory suggestion. For the present we can only wish our readers

"Pleasing dreams and slumbers light."

HOW LORD ROLAND MET HIS WIFE.

I.

ONE summer evening, many years ago, a young man of five-and-twenty, dark, tall, and handsome, dressed and equipped as a tourist—a class much rarer in those days than ours—was wandering along the wildest coast of Cornwall. He carried in his hand a stick, and a fishing-basket with a lid suspended by a strap across his shoulders.

The scenery was singularly wild and lonely. A reach of shelving shore ran, straight and narrow, between the sea and the great cliffs, the dark and rugged walls of which seemed shut against the world. The sun was sinking, and a rosy radiance slept upon the sand, upon the small salt sparkling pools, and upon the endless line of foamy lustre, where the ripple was for ever breaking with a sound like elfin thunder. Lord Roland Raven walked at leisure. He had some miles to traverse before he reached the opening in the cliffs which would conduct him to the village where he meant to pass the night; but the long summer evening was before him, and he was able to enjoy its beauty without need of haste.

All at once he stopped in some surprise; his eyes were fixed upon a point on the cliff-side. He had believed that he was far from any human habitation; yet there a solitary building, like a tower, was perched on a height among the rocks that overhung the sea. A steep and rocky path wound upwards to it from the shore. There was something in its singular position and appearance that touched his curiosity. It was, no doubt, a ruin; but even as a ruin it might be worth a visit. He determined to ascend.

He had been already walking for some days, but hitherto he had met with no adventure, and certainly he had no idea that one was now before him. As he turned aside towards the rocky pathway, no thought was in his mind, no shade of a presentiment, that a strange, a wildly strange experience was ready to befall him.

And yet so it was to be.

The ascent was not so rugged as it looked. The path wound to and fro among the crags, and for some time the tower above him became lost to sight. He was at the top of the ascent before he knew it; a sudden turning brought him out upon the level space on which the tower was built. He stopped in wonder at the scene before him.

The tower was ancient, grey, and tempest-beaten; but it was no ruin. It stood amidst a piece of garden-ground, in which sea-asters thrift, and wild sea-lavender bloomed luxuriantly together. Its lower

half was clothed with ivy, in the midst of which a little casement was set open to the air. At this window a young girl was sitting. Beneath her, on the ground, a flock of pigeons were picking up some food which she had just thrown out; two or three were feeding on the very window-sill; and a noise of cooing and of rustling wings filled all the air with a soft murmur.

The girl herself looked very young—seventeen, or little more. Her dress was white; her long black hair was abundant and flowing; but her face he could not see distinctly, because her eyes were bent upon the birds below her.

Roland for some moments stood in hesitation whether to withdraw before she saw him. Whilst he was still hesitating, the girl raised her eyes and showed him the most lovely face that he had ever seen or dreamed of. By no means sorry to be caught, Roland approached the window, hat in hand; the pigeons, too tame to take to flight, fluttering about his feet as he went forward.

"Pardon me," he said. "I have intruded quite without intention. I was passing on the shore, and was tempted to explore your pathway; but I did not imagine for a moment—" Here came a fluttering of wings about his head, and a large white pigeon alighted on his shoulder.

He and the girl both laughed at the same time. "Oh," she cried, "that's Peepy! Please excuse him; he takes you for old Isaac. Come here, Peepy!"

"May I ask," said Roland, standing with the pigeon on his shoulder, "whether Peepy's notion of a likeness is a good one?"

"Isaac is seventy-two," she said, still laughing. "He is our man-servant; and I do not think that he could ever have been as hand— I do not think that he could ever have been much like you. But Peepy always flies to meet him when he comes up the rock. Come, Peepy!"

Peepy, however, kept his place. Roland shook his shoulder; Peepy fluttered, but was not dislodged.

"He expects to get a piece of sugar," said the girl, "the silly bird!"

Roland had no sugar; but in his basket was a bunch of raisins. He produced it, and presented one. The bird seized it instantly, and flying with it to the rampart of the tower, set himself to taste the novel offering with extreme deliberation.

"Peepy does not stand on ceremony," said his mistress. "I believe he thinks that human beings were expressly made that he might sit upon their shoulders and be fed."

"No doubt of it," said Roland. "A philosopher in feathers." He was standing there before the window, well aware that he had no excuse to linger, but by no means anxious to be gone. Only to look at those great lustrous eyes, only to hear that silvery laugh, was an occupation far too pleasant to be willingly cut short. It was, how-

ever, cut short for him. A voice from some interior region of the tower was suddenly heard calling, "Margaret."

The girl rose. Roland was obliged to take his leave. "I must intrude no longer," he said. "Believe me, I shall never forget Peepy—or his mistress." The last words were added to himself, but something in his look perhaps expressed them; for the girl's face, as he bowed and turned to the descent, was rosier than the glow of sunset could explain.

Roland went down the pathway with a picture in his eye and a sense of mystery in his mind. The picture was that of the most lovely girl whom he had ever seen, framed by the ivy-mantled window of her tower. And his sense of mystery concerned her also. How came she in a place so strange, and yet so charming? Who lived there with her? What was her station?—what her story?

These were questions which he could not answer. They may be answered here.

Margaret Shelland's father was a retired naval captain, a man of superior mind and education. He lived for the greater portion of the year at Valeford, a village some miles distant; but during the heat of summer he was accustomed to take up his abode in the old tower on the cliff-side, together with his daughter and an ancient serving-man and his wife, Isaac and Jane Blow. He liked the wild and solitary dwelling, and Margaret shared his fancy. Their solitude exposed them to no dangers; for, although smugglers and such evil characters at times visited the coast, there was nothing to tempt them to molest the tower. Not only was there nothing worth the taking, but old Captain Shelland was a man of fiery humour, and well known to be extremely ready with his pistols. Accordingly, there the four lived undisturbed, and so it came to pass that Margaret's pigeons built their nests among the crannies of the rocks with the wild gulls.

Roland, absorbed in speculations, went down the rocky pathway. He had already reached the bottom, when on a sudden he was conscious of a flutter of white wings, and there was Peepy once more on his shoulder.

"What!" he said. "Is that you, my winged philosopher? You want another raisin, do you? You shall have one." He took out the bunch as he was speaking, and was about to break it when a thought occurred to him which changed his purpose. He put his hand up softly, caught the bird upon his shoulder, placed it snugly in the basket, shut down the lid and fastened it. Then he resumed his walk along the shore.

There was an aspect of romance about the whole adventure which touched his fancy; he resolved to keep it still. The bird, when he released it, would fly back to the tower; its mistress would receive it; it would light upon her shoulder; her hand would smooth its glossy wings. What if she espied a missive under them? Would she not start to see it, regard it with surprise, take it, open it, and read,

not without a flush of modest pleasure, the tribute of a poet to her charms? Not that Roland was a poet; but, like most men of the age in which he lived, he could embalm a strain of high-flown compliment in rhymes, or turn out a set of album verses on occasion. He resumed his walk along the shore, absorbed in meditation.

Gradually, as he proceeded, the scenery became still wilder. The cliffs grew loftier and more rugged, and approached more nearly to the sea. The waves were rolling in against the wind, which carried off their crests in clouds as fine as mist; and within the misty clouds, as the sunset glowed upon them, started forth at times the elfin likeness of a rainbow, trembling on the gust. It was the wild sea-iris, beautiful exceedingly, dancing, many-coloured, in the whiteness of the spray.

But as far as Roland was concerned, she danced in vain. He walked on, heedless of external objects, his eyes fixed upon the sand. He had proceeded thus for more than half-an-hour, and had left the tower two miles behind him, when the smoothness of the shore was broken by a space of rocks, or giant boulders, which extended from the cliffs into the water. At this spot, he took his seat upon a mass of rock, and drawing forth a note-book from his pocket, began to write as follows:—

Fair Lady of the lonely Tower,
Our wrongs are equal in degree—
You stole my heart the very hour
I took your bird away with me.

This very night again will see
Your bird returning to her bower,
But not my heart return to me,
O Lady of the lonely Tower!

Roland regarded this production with a contemplative eye. He was still considering in what manner it might be improved, when he gave a violent start, and thrust the book into his pocket.

A hand was laid upon his shoulder.

He turned, and saw beside him a man of very short, but broad and powerful figure. His dress was that of a sailor; his face, naturally a grim one, had been rendered of most evil aspect by the loss of one eye, and three or four front teeth. As Roland turned his head, the stranger fixed his solitary eye upon his features with an eager and inquiring gaze. The result of his inspection was most startling. He broke into a kind of snarl of rage and triumph, and seizing the young man by the collar, dragged him from the boulder down upon the sand.

Roland strove with all his might to free himself, but in vain. The struggle was a brief one. Under that deadly clutch the young man gasped for breath; his strength began to fail him, his head swam, he felt that his senses were departing. He seemed to be just conscious of two other men who came running down the rocks

towards them—of being lifted by all three, and carried swiftly in the direction of the cliffs. Then, for an uncertain period, a darkness as of midnight came upon him, and he knew no more.

When he regained his senses, he was seated at the back of a deep cave upon a heavy block of wood, to which he was secured by an iron chain. The dwarf was sitting on the ground before him, evidently awaiting his return to life. The other men had disappeared.

The dwarf's eye glittered in its sunken socket like that of a demoniac. He rose, and placed himself before his prisoner.

"Listen," he said, "Lord Roland Raven. Do you know me?"

"No."

The dwarf paused an instant; then, forcing his voice to steadiness, apparently by strong compulsion, though his one eye burned and his harsh features worked with passion, he thus spoke:—

"A year ago a smuggler's boat, with two men in it (not on this coast—a hundred miles from here), was captured by the coastguard. The night was dark, a shot was fired, and an officer was shot dead. The men were brought to trial, and sentenced to be hanged in chains; but the younger of the two would have been spared, but for the owner of the land on which the deed was done. He made complaint at Court. He was a powerful lord, he had his way, and both the men were hanged." The dwarf advanced his face until his mouth was close against the listener's ear, the forced calmness of his manner suddenly gave way, and his voice rose to a hissing scream: "That lord was your father, and the young man was my son!"

The dwarf paused. Then, as Roland sat silent in amazement, he went on:

"They hanged him on a gibbet on the cliffs above the spot where he was taken. I took an oath of vengeance—on his corpse I swore it. I vowed to kill the man to whom he owed his death. But a few days later he died suddenly, and cheated me of my revenge."

Again he paused an instant; then added in a voice of terrible significance:

"Now—*I have got his son!*"

The tone in which he spoke the words made Roland's blood run chill. The story might be true—was likely to be true. His father had, he knew, exerted all his influence to inflict the utmost rigour of the law upon all smugglers; and he had, as the man said, died suddenly about a year before. Yes—the man's story might be true; a sense of injuries and of brooding vengeance might have touched his brain. For in all this there was one most clear and awful fact. He was at the mercy of a madman.

Whilst the thought went through his mind, the dwarf had struck a light, which he now held burning in his hand. Beside him—the only article in the cave—stood a cask, or rather keg, set upright on one end. The top was open, and the keg seemed filled with coarse black sand. The dwarf pointed to this apparatus with his finger.

"Your father killed my son," he said, "and now I shall kill his. Look at this cask of powder; see this candle standing in it. I light it"—he did so, with the utmost care—"it will burn, burn, for hours, and you will watch it burning; it will grow shorter, slowly, slowly; it will reach the powder—and then it will blow you into atoms!"

With these words the madman turned, and with his grin of mingled rage and triumph which made his hideous features absolutely diabolical, left the cave without another word. Roland heard his steps upon the rocks outside grow fainter, and at last die off upon the sand.

He was alone—with death before him.

II.

All this had passed so quickly that it was some minutes before Roland began to realise the facts of his position. Involuntarily, he fixed his eyes upon the flaming candle, and upon the black shining grains in which it stood. He was there, fixed face to face with its descending flame, doomed, in helpless agony of mind, to watch its slow decrease. How long would the candle burn—one hour, or two, or three—before its low flame reached the powder, and blew him into atoms?

Roland was no coward. As a soldier he would have led a charge, or volunteered for a forlorn hope, without a thought of fear; but to watch, in passive helplessness, the slow advance of certain death will shake an iron heart and nerves of steel. The madman's vengeance had been cunningly conceived. It was safe for the assassin; for before the powder could explode, he would be many a league away, perhaps far off at sea, leaving no trace behind him, no dead body to tell tales; a flash, and the victim would be blown to nothingness. And of all the methods which vindictive ingenuity has devised to rack the mind as well as kill the body, none could surpass the agony of this. Men set to sink in quicksands, sucked slowly from the sight of earth and sky; men fixed under the knife-pendulum, or chained erect in pits of water, falling only drop by drop; such, and such alone, have drunk as deep a measure of the bitterness of death. As the full horror of his fate was borne upon his mind, every fibre in his frame began to thrill, and the hairs upon his head to crawl in every root like things of life.

But *was* he doomed?—was there no possibility of escape? He looked eagerly about the cave. Except for the powder cask and the block of wood on which he sat, the place was absolutely bare. He turned his scrutiny upon the block itself, and upon the chain which held him. The block was a huge bulk-head, half sunken in the earth; immovable as a wall of solid rock. Upon the block, just behind him as he sat, there was an iron ring. His chain went twice about his waist, leaving his arms free, passed through the ring, and was fastened

to a root which jutted from the cavern wall behind him. Through the root the chain was passed, and secured by a long hook at its end, which was hitched into a link. But for one fatal obstacle, Roland could have loosed it with a touch; the root was several feet beyond his reach. He strained himself towards it; but with all his efforts he could not reach the hook by quite a yard. There was in this arrangement an ingenuity of torture which convinced him that it was designed.

Could he break the root to which the chain was fastened? He exerted all his strength; he pulled, he struggled—harder—harder yet. In vain; the root, which was as thick as a man's wrist, curved very slightly outwards, but gave no sign of breaking.

Finding all efforts useless, he at length desisted, and once more set himself to think.

Could he blow out the candle? It stood at least five yards from where he sat. He took a deep-drawn breath, and made the effort. The gust almost imperceptibly shook the flame, but nothing more.

Could but a blast of ocean wind have swept into the cave, and quenched the fatal flame! Alas! the air within the cavern was as still, as motionless, as the air within a tomb.

He raised his voice; he shouted, he made the cavern ring with echoes. But no cry came in answer to his own. In his heart he knew that none *could* come. He ceased the vain endeavour, and once more set himself to think—to think with intensity, with desperation; for *now* he felt, with indescribable horror, that if he sat there gazing at the flame in passiveness he should go raving mad.

The sun by this time had gone down, and but for the candle-light the interior of the cavern would have been quite dark. The cave was about twenty yards in depth; its mouth was straight before him; and he could see, as from the interior of a tunnel, a space of sky still flushed with fading hues, across which a gull was flying. The silence was profound. At times a drop of water from the cavern roof fell with a faint plash; from far off he could hear the whisper of the ripple on the shore. Its murmur in his ears was mingled with another sound—a sound low, dull, and throbbing. That was the fevered beat of his own blood.

Hush! what was that? A sound behind him. He turned quickly; but the blank wall of the cave showed nothing, and the sound was not repeated. Could it have been fancy? It *must* have been so. Once more, as in a kind of dreadful fascination, he fixed his gaze upon the candle.

Gradually, its flame increased before his eyes to thrice its proper size. It seemed a living thing—a fiery demon, implacable, relentless, awaiting the appointed hour of doom. Hush! The sound again behind him—a low, soft, fluttering sound. He turned, and almost laughed. The sound came from the basket at his back! He had forgotten Peepy.

He raised the lid and took out the bird, which fluttered in his

hands. As he held it the whole scene of the evening came rushing back upon his mind. He saw again the ancient tower, the ivy-mantled window, and the lovely girl who sat there looking at her birds. Perhaps at that very moment she was seeking for her favourite, and wondering whither it had strayed. At least her bird should be her own again. Why should it share his fate?

He was about to let it fly when a thought struck him; it was singular that it had not struck him sooner. He instantly replaced the pigeon in the basket, took out the book and pencil with which he had been writing when the dwarf attacked him, and wrote swiftly, "The stranger who visited your tower this evening has been seized by smugglers, and left bound in a cave just where the rocks begin, with a candle burning in a powder-cask before him. It will soon explode. *Help!*"

He wrapped the paper round the pigeon's leg, and secured it with a strip torn off his handkerchief. It could not hinder the bird's flight, nor could it fail to catch the eye at the first glance. Then he released the messenger. It spread its wings, flew twice or thrice about the cave, then darted through the outlet, and vanished in an instant out of sight.

Roland watched it vanish, bearing on its wings the fates of life and death. His heart beat high with hope; but in a few minutes it sank again to despair. The chance that the bird's return would be observed, and the letter found, before it was too late, was so faint as to be almost nothing. But, strange to say—perhaps because his nerves had reached that point of tension beyond which they failed to act—his mind began to lose its consciousness of danger. He sat there, looking idly at the candle, and noting, with a kind of languid interest, that the flame had made itself a "winding-sheet." The wick was long; its top leant over, glowing red. What if a spark should fall into the powder? At one moment he could almost wish it would; at the next, the thought aroused him to new frenzy, and he fought and struggled at his chain until he gasped for breath, and the moisture streamed from every pore. At last he sank exhausted on the block, and lay there without motion.

How long it was before he raised himself he could not tell; it must have been much longer than he thought; for as his eye again fell on the candle, he felt a shock of horror.

Not half an inch of it remained; the stump was melting down into a shapeless mass, in which the wick was flaring. A few moments, and the end *must* come!

With his eyes fixed upon the flame, his breath held, and his arms crossed on his breast, as a doomed soldier stands before the guns of his companions, he nerved himself for the last moment.

Hark! what was that?

A footstep on the rocks outside the cave; a footstep drawing nearer—nearer. He strove to raise his voice; in vain; his tongue

refused its office. It mattered not; a moment, and a figure, guided by the feeble gleam, gained the entrance, paused an instant, and then darted in. Great Heavens! It was the girl herself!

The shock of seeing her the sharer of his danger (for he had thought of nothing but old Isaac, or some other man) struck upon him like a dash of water in the face of one fainting.

"Go back!" he cried, with furious struggles at his chain. "Go back! you will be killed. Don't touch the candle—don't blow it, for the love of God! Go back!" Then seeing that the girl, so far from going, came straight towards his seat, he pointed with his finger to the root which held his chain. "Can you undo that hook?"

The girl stepped quickly to it, and released it in a moment. The chain fell from the root; he moved, and it slipped through the ring. With a mad strength, to which her weight was as a feather, he caught the girl up in his arms, and rushed from the cave.

The instant he was out of it, he turned sharply to the right, along the cliffs. Not till he was fifty yards from the cave's mouth did he set his burden on her feet; then he himself sunk down upon a boulder, shaking like an aspen. Almost at the same moment there came a roar like thunder, and from the cavern's mouth a blast of smoke and flame burst fifty feet into the air. There was a crash of falling rocks, a sense as though the firm earth trembled, a fierce, brief rushing in the air. Then all was still.

At the instant of the explosion the girl had uttered a loud shriek, and then sunk trembling by his side, with her hands clasped close before her eyes. Her companion was almost as much shaken, though from a different cause. "Great Heaven!" he murmured; "to think that *you* were nearly there!" But the next moment he regained his self-possession. It was his task to reassure her.

"There is nothing more to fear," he said, as lightly as he could. "The danger is quite over; and you are safe, and so am I, so there is no harm done."

The girl withdrew her hands, and looked at him, still trembling; then took a deep breath once or twice. "I am frightened," she said. "How terrible it might have been! how horrible! But thank Heaven I was in time! How did it happen? Tell me."

"Not now," said Roland. "You have had enough of horrors for one night; let us think of them no more. Rather, let me thank you for my safety." As he spoke, he rose and stood before her; something about him made a clanking sound. The moon was rising, and by her light the cause was visible. The chain with which he had been bound was still about his waist, from which its long ends trailed behind him; so like an iron tail that neither could help laughing.

The chain, which had been passed twice round his body, had then been knotted; but as its ends were free, the united efforts of the pair

soon loosened it. By the time it lay upon the ground, both were well recovered from their recent agitation.

"This is one thing more I have to thank you for," said Roland. "Will you tell me what your name is?"

They no longer felt or spoke as strangers. Those moments of supreme excitement had brought them closer to each other than months of ordinary acquaintance would have done. She told him: Margaret Shelland.

"Margaret." He repeated the name softly to himself. Then, resuming his light tone: "Tell me that you forgive my stealing Peepy, as I did."

"*Why* did you steal him?" she inquired, her eyes alive with feminine curiosity.

"I meant to make him take another message. But you might justly ask me how I came to send the one I did. I acted without thinking; I never dreamt that *you* would come. Great Heaven! to think of what I nearly led you into! Was there no one you could send?"

"I might have sent old Isaac; but he is slow. And Oh, I am so glad I did not. My father sprained his foot two days ago, and cannot walk with it. And there was no one else."

"And did your father let you come?"

"He did not know it," she replied. "I heard Peepy tapping at my window; I took him in, and I saw the paper in a minute. I read it, and I nearly screamed aloud; but then I thought, my father, if he sees this, will send Isaac, and he will be too late. I will go myself. And I ran all the way. Perhaps my father has not missed me yet; but I must make haste back and tell him."

"And I must come with you," he said. "I have to thank him for my life, since I owe it to his daughter."

"Not to me only," she said, smiling. "To Peepy also."

"True," said Roland; "true. I owe my gratitude to Peepy. But what do I owe to Margaret, my angel of deliverance—to her who brought me back from death to life and love?" As he spoke the last word, rather murmured than aloud, he looked into her face, on which the moonlight rested. She was pale still; she trembled yet; but at his words and look she blushed a rosy red. And then they went together down the shore.

And that was how Lord Roland met his Wife.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.—INTROSPECTIVE.

ANOTHER milestone on Life's journey Home
We pass to-day,
And, as we near the ever longed for bourn,
Ah! can we say
That we have wrought no ill along the way

We started, maybe, with a blithesome heart
In sunny weather;
Saw we the greenness all about our path,
Walking together,
Or did we stray in by-ways far apart?

Each day—a little life—did we pursue
Aught of high aim;
Or wander listless, heedless of the hue
Night's shadows claim,
Shutting out light, and blotting all our view?

Can months, grown out of days, show, at their best
One good work done?
One traveller's weary load by us made less,
One sheltered one;
Or one in sickness eased, or helped to rest?

And have we ever filled the fading space
'Twixt us and Home
With any thought, as still our way we traced,
How far we'd come?
Or whence refreshed we were, as on we paced

Along the toil-worn road? And did we mark
The flowering hedgerows,
And the fresh, sparkling streams that crossed our path?
Or did we launch
In sea of dreams, all tempest tossed, our barque,

And wake to find it vanished into foam,—
Like bubbles—chased
As they were worlds—in fleeting brightness gone!
Our hopes, but based
On shore of sand—we, stranded and alone.

Ah! when we from the mountain top look down
Through wayward mists,
Ere the hours darken, and the waning noon
Blinds our fair tryst,
May we discern our path!—Methinks a crown

Once won, left bleeding footmarks that same way,
To guide us on.
Though feeble wills, and stumbling feet may stray,
There is a strong,
Broad eagle wing of Faith can bear away
O'er highest hills, or deepest seas, each one.

H. R.

THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH

CHAPTER IV.

AT AVRANCHES.

MRS. CANTER succeeded without much difficulty in persuading Reuben to allow Janet to spend Whitsun-week with her in her new home, and when she hinted that she would like to have her for a longer visit another time he seemed inclined to consent to that also.

A day or two before Janet was to leave home, however, Reuben announced his intention of accompanying her. He had not had a week's holiday for twenty years; he missed Norah, to whom he was much attached; he was anxious to see her new home; and finally he decided to go with his daughter.

This announcement of intentions, which, if carried out, would effectually prevent the proposed marriage from taking place, caused Janet's spirits, already depressed by the thought of the deception she was about to practise on her kind father, to sink to zero. And yet she was in duty bound to appear delighted at the prospect of his company. It was settled they should start early on Saturday afternoon. Janet packed up her own things and her father's the night before, and went off to her work at the mill with a heavy heart on Saturday morning after writing to Rex and Mrs. Canter to tell them the bad news.

Reuben, on the contrary, went to his forge in excellent spirits. He felt he had honestly earned the holiday he intended to take, and he meant to enjoy it. Perhaps, too, he might win some souls, of which he was always in quest to join his communion, and then indeed his holiday would be blessed. In the course of the morning Mark Brown came into the forge to get his master's mowing-machine mended, and, before Reuben had time to tell him of his intended holiday, began to talk about his own spiritual affairs.

"Mr. Foreman, I've been turning over in my mind what you

were saying the other day, and I've decided to become a member of your chapel, if you'll do your best to persuade Miss Janet to be my wife. I call that a fair bargain."

"It isn't a question of bargain, Mark; it is the question of saving your immortal soul. Whether Janet is your wife or another man's won't matter a straw to you when you stand before the Judgment Seat. What will matter then is, whether you are to go straight up to heaven and sing among the angels for ever and ever with that tenor of yours, which will be a deal finer then than it is now, or whether you are to go straight down to a fire ten thousand times hotter than any furnace here? That is the question you have to decide. I am not saying I would not as soon have you for a son-in-law, if you were a member, as any other of the brethren, but young people's hearts can't be forced into loving either God or man. Janet must choose for herself. So long as she chooses a good earnest Christian, I don't care who it is," concluded Reuben, as he examined the lawn-mower.

"And that is what I want to become—a good earnest Christian," reiterated Mark.

This was not a true statement. He merely wanted to become Janet's husband, and he thought the surest means of attaining that honour was to join the Baptist Union.

"So I was thinking, if you consider I am fit, Mr. Foreman, I should like to be baptised to-morrow evening," he continued.

He was also thinking there was a large tea-meeting on Whit-Monday, in connection with the chapel, at which he made no doubt Janet would be present, and he knew that, by being baptised on Sunday, he should secure a ticket, and with it, perhaps, a wife.

Now Mark's position as the Rector's servant, and his good voice, made him a very desirable convert; to say nothing of the still greater desirability of rescuing a brand from the burning. Reuben would also add greatly to his own honour and glory if he succeeded in landing this fish, after whom he had long been angling. So, on finding his prey was willing to be landed, he decided to give up his holiday. A new member required a good deal of looking after, and it would not be wise to leave Mark to his own devices for the first week after his baptism.

"The Lord be praised for this," said Reuben, devoutly. "I'll see the minister about it the first thing to-morrow, and if you'll come round to my cottage this evening I'll read and pray with you."

This obliging offer was received by Mark with befitting gratitude, for he fondly imagined Janet would be present during this interesting function. He would have preferred spending the evening in lighter amusement, but the reading would probably afford him opportunities of whispering sweet nothings into Janet's ears, and he could gaze his fill upon her during the prayer; so he left the forge in high glee.

"Janet," said Reuben, when he went home to dinner, "I am very

sorry I shan't be able to go with you, but the Lord has work for me to do here. Mark Brown has decided to be baptised to-morrow. His was a hard heart to win, but it only shows the power of grace to melt the very hardest hearts."

True, Reuben, but the grace that melted Mark's heart was Janet's beauty. If Janet herself suspected this she was careful not to say so; but the revulsion of feeling occasioned by the sudden knowledge that the obstacle was removed which had threatened to mar her happiness, coupled with the strain the excitement she was feeling caused her, was too much for her, and she burst into tears. Reuben, however, attributed it to disappointment at his inability to accompany her, and did his best to comfort her by offering to see her off from the station. Which he did.

Mrs. Canter's new home was about fifty miles from Woodford; a quiet country village named Marling, the scene of Mr. Ryot Tempest's first incumbency. Norah had lived there with the Tempests for ten years, so she was well known in the place, and anticipated no difficulty in obtaining work. Some indeed had been already promised her before she left Woodford, which place reminded her at every turn of her late husband so painfully that she could not make up her mind to remain in it. Some of Canter's relations lived at Marling, and Mrs. Canter had no difficulty in getting them to look after her children on Whit-Monday while she went up to London, ostensibly for a day's outing; in reality, as we know, for Janet's marriage.

It was Norah's first visit to London, and if she pleased herself it would certainly be her last, as she informed the lovers, who, however, were far too much occupied with themselves to pay any attention to her criticisms of the Metropolis. According to Mrs. Canter, who looked at the great city chiefly from a professional point of view, it had not a redeeming feature. The only decent drying ground she saw during her flying visit of a few hours' duration was Hyde Park, and that, Rex informed her, was not available for the purpose. The blacks, she declared, would break any laundress's heart who took a proper pride in her work; while as for washing, it would be a downright waste of time to attempt it in such an atmosphere of fog and smuts; the things would be black before they had time to dry. Her opinion of London did not rise when she saw how the ceremony of marriage was performed there: for Rex, thinking with Rory O'Moore that "there is safety in numbers," had chosen to be married in a church where a whole batch of couples were made happy, or miserable, at the same time.

If that was the proper way to marry people, she, a widow with six children, had never been married; and if she were to mix the quality's shirts and petticoats as the parson and clerk mixed up those couples, her linen would never get back to its rightful owners, and her prestige as an honest laundress would be gone. However, she managed to keep a sharp look-out on Rex and Janet, and was pre-

pared to argue audibly with the parson and knock down the clerk, if they showed any signs of coupling Rex with a strange bride.

On the completion of the ceremony, she declined all offers of sight-seeing out of respect to the late Canter's memory, greatly to the relief of the bride and bridegroom; and, having seen them depart on their brief honeymoon, she awaited the next train for Marling seated on the platform, her plump hands folded below her portly figure—a silent but severe critic of porters and passengers.

A week after, Janet returned to her father's cottage, and a few days later her young husband sailed for Manitoba.

Rex had expressed a wish that she should not return to her work at the mill, and as there was really no need for her to do so—indeed, Reuben, as we have already stated, had never been anxious for her to work at a factory—Janet gave it up, on the pretext that now her Aunt Norah had left, she would have the washing to do; and what with making and mending her own clothes, cooking, and cleaning the house, she really had no need to be idle. Nevertheless, she had plenty of spare time in which to fret for Rex, and grieve over her fault in deceiving her father—a fault Reuben would find it very hard to forgive, for he looked upon a lie as the blackest of sins; and probably Janet would have been happier if she had had her usual regular work.

A few days after Rex sailed the Ryot Tempests left Woodford for Avranches, where for the first week they lived at the hotel, a fairly comfortable one. But Mr. Ryot Tempest soon tired of it. He disliked the hours of the table-d'hôte; the cuisine upset his digestive organs; moreover he had nothing to do, no marketing, no housekeeping. Consequently his mornings hung heavily on his hands, and he became nervous and fidgety, not to say cross. So that when he announced to his wife and daughter that he had taken a furnished house for the rest of their visit, Mrs. Ryot Tempest was not sorry.

Vera was very indignant. The hotel life suited her exactly. It amused her to see fresh faces every day, even though she had no chance of making acquaintance with anyone; for she was always placed at the table between her father and mother, Mrs. Tempest holding very French notions as to the amount of liberty to be accorded to girls.

The very first day of their arrival, Vera's attention had been attracted by an English gentleman who that day sat at the top of the table; but he ordered his place to be changed, so that the next day Vera found he was her vis-à-vis, and he listened to her lively conversation with apparently much amusement.

He was a tall, thin man, with the unmistakable air of an English officer about him. He had large dark eyes, which seemingly cost him an effort to open, for he raised them very languidly; indeed,

his whole air was languid, and he looked as if his chief idea was how exceedingly tiring it was to live. He was evidently of pale complexion, but sunburnt through residence in a foreign climate. He had a long dark moustache, which he stroked caressingly and almost incessantly. He spoke but little and never began a conversation. If addressed he answered courteously, but his manner said plainly he would prefer, if the effort of making a choice were thrown upon him, to be allowed to eat his dinner in peace.

Now one of Vera's accomplishments was mimicry, and the languid air of her vis-à-vis and his slow drawl were irresistible. In a few days she was perfect in both, and, to Mr. Ryot Tempest's horror, came down to dinner the evening he had announced his intention of leaving the hotel, prepared to exhibit her proficiency in the art. She assumed a languid air, the very counterpart of the gentleman's opposite, she raised her eyes just as he did, and, instead of rattling on in French and English as she usually did to her father and mother drawled out her answers to their attempts at conversation in so exact an imitation of her opposite neighbour that no one who was listening could fail to recognise the person she was mimicking. In vain did Mr. Ryot Tempest fidget and frown and in impatient undertones reprove her for her rudeness; in vain did Mrs. Tempest expostulate with her in rapid French. Vera was deaf to both, and kept up the part she was playing through six courses. Her victim ignored her conduct utterly; he was as calm and as languid and as little inclined for conversation as ever; not the faintest sign betrayed he was conscious of the amusement Vera was causing at his expense. Only when she rose from the table, one flash from those dark eyes, a flash that had no languor about it, told her he had observed her, had writhed under her conduct, had done nothing to provoke it, had difficulty in forgiving it.

"What do you mean, Vera, by making such an exhibition of yourself?" demanded Mr. Ryot Tempest irritably, as soon as they reached their own sitting-room.

"I don't know, papa. I wanted to have some fun before we left the hotel. It will be dull enough after to-morrow, we three shut up in a large house just as we are at home."

"Fun, indeed! Your conduct was most unladylike, and positively insulting to Captain Raleigh. For that, I understand, is the gentleman's name, and a very good name it is, too. My only surprise is that he did not leave the table. I really think I ought to call upon him and apologise for your conduct."

"I will go myself, if you like. What fun it would be!" said Vera, glancing at herself in the glass to see if her hair was in order for the visit she proposed making.

"Certainly not. Perhaps I may have an opportunity of saying something suitable before we leave the hotel. I know a little of his family, and if, as I conjecture, he is one of *the* Raleighs, they

are distantly connected with the Ryots; so no doubt, under the circumstances, the matter could be easily adjusted."

But the next day Captain Raleigh did not appear in the salle-à-manger; and the day after, the Ryot Tempests moved into the house Mr. Tempest had hired in the Boulevard du Sud.

Mr. Ryot Tempest's mornings were now fully occupied. As soon as breakfast was over he sallied forth, accompanied by Vera and followed by a French servant carrying a basket to the town, where he spent a good hour in doing his marketing for the day. He then went to the club and read the papers; then returned home and occupied the rest of the morning until luncheon in planning some drive or excursion for the afternoon. On Saturday his domestic duties were increased, for it was market day; so he went to market first, to lay in a stock of poultry and butter for the week, after the fashion of the place.

They left the hotel on a Wednesday, and on the following Saturday Vera and her father went to market. They had seen nothing of Captain Raleigh since that night at dinner, and Vera, though she would not have confessed it, was secretly regretting her rudeness to him as she followed her father down the street in which the butter market was held. Here, ranged in two long lines, stood the butter-women, all in caps of different shapes, all holding baskets of butter wrapped in cloths, all talking volubly, and entreating the passers-by to taste their butter. This Mr. Ryot Tempest proceeded to do so often with a little wooden spoon he carried for the purpose, that Vera felt sure he would be laid up with a bilious attack the next day.

At last he decided on some butter and moved to the weighing place to have it duly weighed before it was transferred to Marie's basket. While he was thus engaged Vera was dreaming of a certain tall, thin man with a languid manner, and wondering why she felt so much interest in him, and if she would ever see him again. Just as the butter transaction was concluded, this question was settled by the appearance of Captain Raleigh at the opposite end of the lane of butter-women. He was sauntering languidly along, carrying a large white umbrella to protect himself from the sun, which was very hot.

"How effeminate! I suppose he is afraid of his complexion," thought Vera, immediately closing her own parasol of lace and ribbons, which was certainly more ornamental than useful, to set the object of her censure a good example.

Mr. Ryot Tempest now moved on to the poultry market, where for the next twenty minutes he was occupied in weighing by their feet various couples of live ducks and chickens tied up for sale. When satisfied with the weight of a couple, he proceeded to examine their combs and to feel their breasts. Then ensued a lively debate as to their age and price, which always ended in Mr. Tempest moving on to another stall and going through the same process there.

This interesting pastime had been going on for nearly half-an hour, when Vera, who was thoroughly sick of it, and was longing to walk about the market and look at the people, not at the wares, was startled by a cry of "Mad dog," accompanied by various shouts and screams.

The cries came from a narrow street at right angles with the square in which the poultry market was held; and a few paces from Vera, at the bottom of this street, stood a small child who could just manage to walk alone, and was now absorbed in sucking a fig some charitable person had bestowed upon it. If the dog were not arrested before it reached this corner, the child, who stood straight in its course all unconscious of the danger menacing him, would in all probability be a victim to it.

Vera saw this, and without a moment's hesitation she dashed forward to draw the boy into a place of safety. But she was too late; she and the dog, a vicious-looking brute, reached the boy at the same moment. Vera seized the child with one hand, and with the other brandished her parasol to ward off the attack of the dog, when suddenly a blow on the head from the handle of a white umbrella stunned the brute, and before it had time to recover, it was despatched by the men who were pursuing it. The same stroke that felled the dog broke Vera's frail sunshade into two pieces, but she was too much engaged in quieting the now sobbing child and in escaping with it from the crowd that had collected to think of her parasol.

Not so Captain Raleigh. Having inadvertently smashed it when he rushed forward to rescue Vera, he now mingled with the crowd and picked up the pieces as nimbly as Vera herself could have done, and then advancing to her with his most languid air, he presented the broken parasol with a long-drawn-out apology.

"I am very sorry to have broken your pretty parasol, Miss Tempest; it was very awkward of me. I trust you are not hurt." And, without waiting for an answer, Captain Raleigh opened his white umbrella and sauntered off with the air of a man who had never been in a hurry or exerted himself in his life.

"Vera, Vera! where are you? What is all this commotion? Why do you leave my side? What are you doing?" exclaimed Mr. Ryot Tempest, bustling up to Vera, very much pleased with himself for having succeeded in getting a couple of ducks for fifty centimes less than he was originally asked for them.

"I am doing nothing," said Vera. "Captain Raleigh has just killed a mad dog which in another moment would have bitten me, and I am thinking I didn't deserve it of him."

"A mad dog! You know my horror of hydrophobia, Vera. Dear me, dear me! I hope it has not touched you. Are you quite sure it didn't? A mere scratch might produce rabies, you know."

"It didn't touch me or the child; but I can't do any more

marketing to-day, papa. I must go home, please; my parasol is broken," said Vera. And Mr. Tempest, seeing she was pale, took her home at once; but he failed to get a satisfactory account of what had happened from her. All she was inclined to talk of was her broken parasol, and Captain Raleigh's stupidity in breaking it.

"You are very unreasonable, Vera. I understood you to say Captain Raleigh had rescued you from the mad dog," said Mr. Tempest.

"So he did; but he broke my parasol; and he might have lent me his umbrella. I am dreadfully hot. I daresay I shall have a sunstroke; and it will be all his fault, stupid man," said Vera, pouting.

"A sunstroke, my dear Vera? I hope not. You are quite sure the dog did not touch you? You must keep quiet for the rest of the day, and I will go this afternoon and call on Captain Raleigh and thank him for his gallant behaviour."

This was precisely what Vera wanted. She wished to be left to herself, or at least to her mother, to think over the events of the morning, of which she had only a confused idea. She could still see in her mind's eye the dreadful dog about to spring on her, and a tall, slim figure, which seemed the incarnation of strength and energy, interposing and stunning the mad, hunted creature with a white umbrella, and the glimpse she had caught of a pale face with flashing eyes and tightly-closed lips haunted her alternately with a picture of the languid man who for a week sat opposite her at the table d'hôte. She also wished with all her heart to become acquainted with this man, who interested her more than anyone she had ever met; but, had she shown the least anxiety to do so, Mr. Ryot Tempest would have thrown every obstacle in the way, even though Captain Raleigh was, if one of *the* Raleighs, a connection of the Ryots.

That afternoon Captain Raleigh received a visit from Mr. Ryot Tempest. He was lying on the sofa in his private room in the hotel when his guest was announced, and did not catch the name; but he knew the dapper little man before him was Vera's father.

"Mr. Tempest, I believe," said Captain Raleigh, rising.

"Ryot, if you please," corrected Mr. Tempest, with a smile.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Ryot."

"Tempest, if you please," again corrected Mr. Ryot Tempest, with a second smile.

What on earth is the fellow's name? wondered Captain Raleigh, as he stroked his moustache in despair.

"Ryot Tempest," explained the owner of this name.

"Thanks. Pray be seated, Mr. Ryot Tempest. I am delighted to see you," said Captain Raleigh.

Mr. Ryot Tempest seated himself, and spent the next quarter of an hour in endeavouring to prove to his host the connection between the Ryots and the Raleighs. Having settled this to his own satis-

faction, he proceeded to the object of his visit—to thank Captain Raleigh for killing the mad dog, and to gain an exact account of what had taken place. But in this he failed; for all he could get out of Captain Raleigh was admiration of Vera's conduct in trying to save the child, and blame of his own stupidity in breaking her parasol, till Mr. Ryot Tempest inwardly cursed the parasol, and regretted that his cloth did not allow him to do so aloud.

We have said before that Mr. Ryot Tempest possessed the feminine vice of curiosity, and as he was intensely anxious to know all about Captain Raleigh, it is perhaps unnecessary to add that he did not rise to leave until he had gratified his curiosity. When he did go, he had discovered the following facts with regard to him :—

Captain Raleigh was one of *the* Raleighs. He was an only son ; his father was dead, his mother lived in Norfolk, and he was returning there the next day ; he was now home from India on sick-leave, having had a sunstroke; he had been making a little tour in Normandy, but his state of health prevented him from doing much, and he ought to have gone home a week ago, had he felt equal to the journey. He did not add that interest in Vera had induced him to prolong his stay to the last day ; but this was the truth. Neither did he volunteer the information that he was of the same religion as Mrs. Ryot Tempest. Had he done so, he would not have been invited to Woodford if he were ever in that part of England, which invitation Mr. Ryot Tempest gave him before he took his leave.

The next morning a lovely bouquet of hothouse flowers was brought to Vera with Captain Raleigh's compliments, and on the back of his card, which was tied to the flowers, was written "Au revoir."

An hour later Captain Raleigh left Avranches, but he left his heart behind him.

CHAPTER V.

"OH! THAT THOSE LIPS HAD LANGUAGE!"

We left Mark Brown on Whitsun-eve in a very devotional frame of mind, contemplating baptism by immersion the next day, and anticipating great pleasure from the tea-meeting on Monday, when he, being the hero of the hour, would doubtless receive much attention and flattery from the Baptist connection, and would, he trusted, thus have a favourable opportunity for declaring his passion for Janet to that young woman. Consequently, he returned to his Saturday's work in excellent spirits. To say that the thought of Janet left but little room for meditation on his spiritual affairs, notwithstanding his profession of penitence to Reuben, is only to say that Mark was human ; and as he cleaned the carriage and stable, the thought of Janet's perfections rather than his own sins occupied his mind.

But Janet was still to be won, and Mark was well aware that unless he had Reuben openly on his side, his own powers of attraction were not sufficient to win her heart. So, being very practical, he bethought himself of a method of ingratiating himself in the blacksmith's favour.

One of Mark's accomplishments in his own opinion was writing verses; in fact, he secretly thought Providence had meant him for a poet, whilst circumstance, that most unspiritual god, had made him a groom and gardener. As a rule, his poetry was of an amorous nature, and assumed the lyric form; but as Mark fetched his scythe to mow the lawn for Sunday, in the absence of the lawn mower, he decided to aspire higher. He would write a hymn, and take it with him that evening when he went for the spiritual instruction Reuben had promised him. He could hardly give a more graceful proof of the sincerity of his feelings.

It was a hot day, the air was filled with subdued sounds, and the rhythmical swish of Mark's scythe, the hum of insects, and the low warbling of the birds in the shrubbery were conducive to a poetic frame of mind; so that when he finished mowing he retired to the harness-room, and before beginning the prosaic work of cleaning the harness, he produced writing materials, and delivered his soul of some verses, modelled on a hymn he had heard Reuben singing.

This production, instinct with piety, savouring, as it did, in the two first verses of Reuben's trade, and in the third of Mark's recent occupation, was written in blue ink on pink paper, and carefully placed in the pocket of his second-best coat until the evening, the author having every confidence that so spiritual and devout a composition would gain him a father-in-law if not a wife; though, indeed, if Janet, when she heard it, could refuse to wed the talented writer, she must be harder-hearted than Mark could believe, and would do well to add the hymn to her daily prayers.

That evening was a turning-point in the life of Mark Brown, though he did not recognise it at the time. His anger when he found Janet had gone away for a week was none the less deep that he was obliged to conceal it, and he inwardly abused Reuben for allowing her to go as he pretended to listen to his instructions. He was enraged with himself too for having consented to join the Baptists. But he had gone too far to retract; he must submit to being baptised the next day, and he must keep up his hypocritical profession of piety, or lose all hope of Janet. So he decided to commit the sin of sacrilege; and the next day, with his heart full of anger and hypocrisy, he was baptised "in the same baptism as John Tanner," another convert: and from that hour his course was a downward one.

When Janet returned from her brief honeymoon, she found, to her distress, she would not be able to avoid Mark as much as she had hitherto done, for his connection with Reuben gave him excuses for dropping in constantly in the evening. To her further annoyance

her father sometimes left them alone, and Mark always seized the opportunity to press his suit.

"Janet," he said, regardless of grammar, on one of these occasions: "I have got something since you went away—something very precious.—I have got religion!"

"I am very glad to hear it, Mark."

"And salvation, Janet," continued Mark, his face glowing with a passion which was scarcely religious in its nature, in spite of the prize he had won.

"I hope you are happy," said Janet sadly; "for I suppose if we have certainly gained salvation, we have gained more than the whole world can give."

"Happy! No, I am not. I want something better than religion and more precious to me than salvation. I want you, Janet, and I shall never know what happiness means till I have you."

"I wish you would not talk so, Mark," said Janet uneasily, glancing at the tall grandfather's clock which stood in the corner, and wondering when Reuben, who had gone to fetch some milk for supper, would return. She was sitting working by the light of a cheap lamp, which stood on the kitchen table. At the opposite corner of it sat Mark glaring at her, his ugly face propped up by his left hand, the elbow of which rested on his knee. His right arm was stretched across the table, and he brought it down with a bang as he answered Janet's last remark.

"Why should not I talk so? This is a free country, and surely if a man loves a girl, he is free to tell her so?"

"Mind the lamp, Mark," said Janet, for his violent action shook the gimcrack little lamp.

"What do I care for the lamp? What do I care for anything in this world but you? It is you I long for; you I dream of night and day; you I live for; you I will have in spite of your pride," exclaimed Mark, working himself into a fury.

"I am not proud," said Janet.

"Then do as I want you; be my wife, and let us have done with this shilly-shallying. Will you, Janet?" And, as he spoke, he rose and tried to put his arm round Janet's waist; but she shrank from him as if he were a leper, rising hastily from her chair and moving towards the door.

Mark stretched across the table to stop her, and in so doing, accidentally or not will never be known, knocked over the lamp, which broke, the oil caught fire, and the flames barred Janet's progress and drove her screaming back towards Mark.

What action he would have taken next cannot be recorded, for just then the door opened, and Reuben entered. Quick as thought he emptied the contents of his milk-can upon the flames, and tearing off his thick pea-jacket, threw it over the burning oil and finally trod out the fire. It all happened so quickly, that on looking back upon

it afterwards, it seemed to Janet like a terrible dream, in which she was driven to choose between death by fire or life with Mark; and, dear as life was to her in the prime of her youth and beauty, one seemed, under these circumstances, as terrible as the other.

When Reuben had extinguished the fire and turned his own bull's-eye on the scene, he found Janet sobbing hysterically in the chimney-corner, and Mark with a sheepish air looking sulkily at her. He never succeeded in getting a clear account of what had passed between them, but from that day Janet was never annoyed by any more visits from Mark Brown, and she rightly gave her father the credit of having put an end to them.

This was not all gain to Janet, for Mark was determined to marry her. He had not joined the Baptists for nothing; he would not be made a fool of in this way; so he took to dogging her footsteps and waylaying her whenever she went out—his master's absence from home, gave him plenty of leisure time. And on this account, and also because Janet knew Vera would be a friend to her, she longed for the return of the Tempests.

Meanwhile Vera was tasting the first real sorrow of her life at Avranches. There the Ryot Tempests were in daily intercourse with a Father Ambrose, curé of one of the churches, and an old and valued friend. He was a Frenchman, but had spent much of his life in England, and spoke English remarkably well. At this time he was about sixty years old; a tall, thin, ascetic-looking man with a refined face, and a kind, fatherly manner. He was on very intimate terms with the Tempests, and had known Vera from her birth. Indeed, he it was who married her father and mother, and ever since that marriage they had met once a year. If the Ryot Tempests did not go to Avranches, Father Ambrose came to Woodford and stayed at the convent. He got on exceedingly well with Mr. Tempest, and was very proud of Vera and her mother.

One day, soon after Captain Raleigh's departure, these four made an excursion to some ruins, and Vera, who had been dreaming all day of Captain Raleigh, afterwards looked back upon that day as one of the happiest of her life. It was not till they returned home that the cloud arose which was to cast a dark shadow over it.

On their arrival Mrs. Ryot Tempest was taken ill. At first her illness appeared to be only a bilious attack, and as she was often ill, neither Vera nor her father was alarmed. But on the third day, the doctor who had been called in told Mr. Tempest that it was no bilious attack; the heart was the cause of the illness. Though his wife might rally and live for some years, she was in danger, and whilst this crisis lasted might go off at a moment's notice.

Father Ambrose was at once sent for, and undertook to break to the patient the state she was in. But he found she was quite aware of her danger, and resigned to it, though for Vera's sake she would

have wished to have been spared a few years longer, at least till she was married; for she dreaded leaving her sweet but wilful little daughter, knowing as she did how little sympathy there was between Vera and her father. Now that Rex, to whom Vera was devoted, was gone so far away and her mother was about to depart to a still more distant land—the land that is very far off—the child would be sadly lonely.

After her interview with Father Ambrose, Mrs. Tempest sent for Vera, who was still ignorant of her mother's dangerous state. Indeed, the girl, on whose young life the light of love had just broken, was inclined to look at everything through rose-coloured glasses, and so had been less anxious about her mother than she would have been at another time. She was therefore almost stunned when her pretty, gentle mother told her she believed her hours were numbered and her end very near. Vera could not believe it, still less could she realise it, as Mrs. Tempest saw.

"It is true, Vera, darling; and before I go I want to tell you what I feel I ought to have told you long ago; but I yielded to your father's wishes, feeling they were but natural. You were baptised by Father Ambrose, Vera ——"

"I, mamma!" interrupted Vera.

"Yes, dearest. Both you and Rex, by your father's consent, though he stipulated that you should be brought up in his faith until you were twenty-one, and then you were to be allowed to choose for yourselves to which faith you would belong. Till then I was not to influence you except by my prayers, and I am afraid, I can truly say, I have kept my promise only too well. But now that I am on the verge of the grave ——"

"Don't, mamma!" pleaded Vera in her distress.

"My dear, we must bravely face the truth," gently returned her mother. "Now that I am about to leave you, I see things from a very different point of view, and I implore you, Vera, when you are of age to embrace the faith you were baptised into. Do not rest till you have satisfied yourself that it is right for you to do this, and get Father Ambrose, whom your father respects and likes, to help you. Tell Rex what I have told you, for though he is twenty-three he is still ignorant of it, and deeply do I regret that I let him go abroad without telling him. And pray, my darling, that your mother may be forgiven for having loved her husband more than the souls of her children."

Vera heard, but her mind was so full of the thought that her darling mother was dying that she scarcely took in the rest at the time. Religion was not a subject that interested her; she seldom gave it a thought. It seemed quite natural to her that her mother, who was French, was also a Catholic, and that her father being English should be consequently a Protestant. She now learnt that she was a Catholic by baptism, but the inconsistent conduct of her

parents in baptising her in one faith, and bringing her up in the other did not strike her at the time. Her mother's state was the only thing that appeared of the least consequence to her. Even the thought of Captain Raleigh was excluded by the fear lest her mother should be taken from her.

From that time Vera scarcely left her mother's side, and after the above conversation Mrs. Tempest grew rapidly worse. It had stirred her soul to its depths and increased the heart-mischief. The very next day she breathed her last, gently, and without a struggle, in the presence of her husband, Vera and Father Ambrose, who administered the last sacraments of his Church.

When all was over it was Father Ambrose who led Vera from the room where, in the sacred presence of death, her passionate grief seemed out of place. The contrast between the peaceful calmness of the sleeping mother, who looked scarcely older than her daughter as she lay with her beautiful wavy brown hair all loose, and the sobbing girl, wild with grief as she was, was as great as the difference between peace and war. One had fought the battle of life, and, as Father Ambrose devoutly hoped, won the victory ; the other had just entered into the thick of the fight, and who could say what the issue of the battle would be ?

It was lucky for Vera that Father Ambrose was there, for Mr Ryot Tempest was too much absorbed in his own grief, and in making the necessary arrangements for the funeral, to look after her. But it was clear to the kind old priest, well versed as he was in human suffering, that she was in no fit state to be left. So he stayed with her till the nuns he had sent for had performed the last sad offices for the dead mother, and then he handed Vera over to them, that they might take charge of her till she was well enough to endure solitude ; and for the next day or two, until after the funeral, the nuns took it in turns to watch by the dead mother and the sorrowing daughter.

It was arranged that Vera and her father should leave Avranches for home the day after the funeral, the doctor insisting that Vera should at once be taken away from the scene of her mother's death. Father Ambrose, who had proved himself an invaluable friend, and had taken much trouble off Mr. Ryot Tempest's hands, saw them off, and for a long time was haunted by Vera's sad, beautiful face, crowned with her golden hair, and the great dark eyes, lovelier than ever now grief had washed them, which were lifted up to his as she bade him an affectionate good-bye, and begged him to write to her. Then the slight, graceful figure in its deep mourning sank back in the railway carriage, and in a few minutes was on its way home.

CHAPTER VI.

MARK'S FOLLY.

THE Ryot Tempests travelled by easy stages, for neither father nor daughter was anxious to reach that now desolate home. Yet when at last they drove up to the Rectory gates, Vera felt a thrill of gladness, and for the first time since her mother's death, realised that there was still something left to live for. The garden was brilliant with geraniums and calceolarias, the sun was shining brilliantly in an almost cloudless sky, so that all nature seemed to be smiling on her, and she almost felt as if she were waking from some dreadful dream as the carriage stopped at the door. There a pleasant surprise greeted her in the person of Norah Canter, who stood on the steps and clasped the motherless girl in her motherly arms, and almost carried the now sobbing Vera into the house.

"Yes, Mr. Tempest," said Mrs. Canter presently, "I knew Miss Vera would want me, so I made so bold as to come over yesterday, and got my niece, Janet, to go and look after the children and the washing for a week, while I take care of this poor motherless child. The clothes will suffer, I know, sir, especially the starched things; but there, when a human heart is breaking you can't be thinking of frilled petticoats and fine shirts."

And so for the next week Mrs. Canter did her best to fill up the gap Mrs. Tempest's death had made, and was useful to Vera in many ways. She was an excellent listener, and was deeply interested in hearing all the details of Mrs. Tempest's illness and death; details which it did Vera good to pour out. And when Vera confided to her the new interest Captain Raleigh's acquaintance had brought into her life, she knew how to turn the conversation on him when the girl was plunged in grief for her mother.

And when, the day before she left, Vera showed her a letter she had received that morning from Captain Raleigh, in which he begged to offer her his sincere sympathy in her great sorrow, and hoped to have the pleasure of paying a visit to Woodford in the autumn, Mrs. Canter went home comforted about her, seeing that the new interest in her life was an all-absorbing one, and that Vera, though stunned at first by grief, was rallying from the blow she had received. Vera also communicated to Norah what Mrs. Tempest had told her on her death-bed, and received the benefit of Mrs. Canter's theological views in return.

"If I were you, Miss Vera, I should not decide anything till I was going to be married, and then I should be whatever my husband was. I don't hold with mixed marriages myself. Married folk must have their differences, of course, but there is one point they ought to think alike upon, and that is religion; as I told poor Canter. So, though he was born and bred a Methodist, when I married him, I took him to

church regularly twice every Sunday with me, because I do think a wife ought to be of the same religion as her husband. I don't hold with chapel-folk any more than I do with Catholics ; one believes too little and the other too much for me ; so I go to church, where you can believe as much or as little as you like. Talking of believing, would you believe me, Miss Vera, I have had to change my washing-day since I left Woodford from Monday to Tuesday ?"

"No, indeed, Norah ; I thought washing-day was as immovable a festival as Christmas-day. But why ?"

"Because, Miss Vera, though there is a mighty lot of fools in the world, there is more at Marling than in most places. Folks there will have their clean linen sent home on Friday nights, which is reasonable enough, but they won't let me have their dirty linen till Monday. So I have to waste half Monday sending about for clothes ; double trouble, double expense, and nothing gained ; only a day lost, and all because it is the custom in London and most towns, where they know no more about washing than I do about dancing. However, I have raised my prices in consequence, and if I could but get Reuben to let me have Janet this winter, I might save a little money."

Truth to tell, Mrs. Canter was more anxious about Janet than about Vera now, for she went back to Marling without having succeeded in getting a promise from her brother that he would spare Janet for the winter : though he allowed it was advisable to get the girl away from Mark's persecution.

"Vera," said Mr. Ryot Tempest, one day about two months after his wife's death, "I think we should pay a visit of condolence to Mrs. Jamieson this afternoon."

"She hasn't sent out 'return thanks' cards yet," objected Vera, who had no great liking for the lady in question.

"True ; but ours will be a friendly visit, not a mere formal call. Our own sorrow should teach us to 'weep with those who weep,' or we lose one of the great lessons it is intended to teach us."

"I don't think we are likely to find Mrs. Jamieson weeping ; it would make her nose and eyes red. Moreover, I should not think she has much to weep for. The death of that cross, gouty old husband, whom she considered the only drawback to her marriage, must be rather a subject of congratulation than of condolence."

"Vera, I regret to hear a young girl of your age giving vent to cynicism worthy of Diogenes. It is most unbecoming."

"I am very sorry ; I didn't mean to be cynical, papa. I will go with you, if you wish it."

"Yes, my dear, I do wish it. We will start at three, if you please, and Mark must go with us to hold the pony."

Vera knew well enough Mark was taken for the sake of appearances, for Mrs. Jamieson was a woman of some position and a leading member of the local society. She had just lost her husband, who died a month after Mrs. Ryot Tempest, and was consequently

obliged to retire for a while from the garden-parties and other social gatherings she was wont to grace with her presence; and whether or no Vera was right in her estimation of the grief the loss of her husband brought, Mrs. Jamieson's forced abstinence from society was a real trial to her.

She was a tall, fine, handsome woman, inclining to coarseness as she drew near to her fortieth year, with dark hair and eyes and a rather high colour. She was exceedingly well preserved, and when she chose—and she generally did choose—could be an extremely fascinating woman: always saying the right thing in the right place; clever without being in the least intellectual; a thorough woman of the world, aiming at popularity, and, as she was rich and agreeable, securing it. Her married life had not been a happy one; but she had married solely for money, so she made the best of it, hoping secretly for better times, when she would not be burdened with an old and gouty husband.

She lived in a charming house with delightful grounds, about four miles from the Ryot Tempests, with whom she was on friendly, though not intimate, terms, though she greeted Vera as if she had been her greatest friend on this occasion.

She looked very well in her widow's mourning, which became her exceedingly, toning down as it did her appearance of somewhat exuberant health, and lending an air of interest to what had hitherto been a very common-place existence. She had too much good taste to allude to her visitors' sorrow, but dwelt largely upon her own loss, in which trial Mr. Ryot Tempest professed deep sympathy, and probably felt it. Vera neither felt nor expressed any sympathy, nor did she for one moment believe Mrs. Jamieson felt a spark of real sorrow for her husband's death. The visit was not a long one, for Vera, not seeing her way to declining the overtures of friendship Mrs. Jamieson was making without being rude, and not having the faintest intention of responding to them, rose to go at the earliest opportunity.

"I had no idea she was so handsome," said Mr. Ryot Tempest as they drove home.

"I suppose she is a gentleman's beauty. I thought her too stout," said Vera.

"A very fine figure, my dear Vera, a very fine figure," said Mr. Tempest, who, like most little men, admired big women. "And a most charming woman," he added.

"Yes, she is very charming, but she is an arrant humbug," said Vera, whipping the pony.

"Be careful, my dear, please; the pony won't bear the whip. And I really wish you would endeavour to check that critical spirit; such harsh judgments are most uncharitable."

"It may be uncharitable, but I am sure it is true, and truth and charity are not always easy to reconcile with each other. I don't

like Mrs. Jamieson, papa; I never did; so let us talk of something else," concluded Vera, secretly rather ashamed of her remarks on Mrs. Jamieson, for whom she was feeling an unaccountable aversion.

Perhaps it was because of Vera's acknowledged dislike for Mrs. Jamieson that Mr. Ryot Tempest paid his next visit to her about a fortnight later alone. And perhaps he was right when he told himself he wished this second visit to be of a pastoral nature, although as Mrs. Jamieson did not live in his parish it was rather a work of supererogation on his part.

On this occasion he made two discoveries with regard to Mrs. Jamieson. He discovered, in the first place, that she was of a very sympathetic nature; and in the next that she was a woman of excellent judgment, who had evidently formed a most correct and high opinion of his ability and worth. He did not discover that she was fully aware of the value of flattery, and knew to a nicety how much every man she came across would swallow. As a rule, the amount was large, and Mr. Ryot Tempest was by no means an exception to the rule. She had the tact to see that any open allusion to his wife's death would be impolitic at this stage of their acquaintance, for it was clear his love and his grief were very real; but this did not deter her from offering deep sympathy with the loneliness and strangeness of his present position, which she understood by sad experience so well. And when she delicately hinted that his sweet daughter was probably too young to enter into his desolate feelings, Mr. Ryot Tempest responded by confiding to her how little he and Vera had in common.

"Ah, yes, Mr. Ryot Tempest, I can so well understand how inadequate the immature mind of a young girl like Vera must be to enter into the thoughts and interests of a learned man and a classical scholar like yourself. There must of necessity be a gulf between you it will take years, almost a small lifetime, to bridge over. A woman's mind seldom matures much under forty, so I can quite feel it must be as impossible for your daughter to be a real companion to you as it is for you to take much interest in the tennis and other frivolities which make up the lives of girls."

Mr. Ryot Tempest moved a little uneasily in his chair; for Vera was not a frivolous girl by any means; and, as he knew, was quite qualified to enter into all his studies if she had thought them worth pursuing.

"Vera is not exactly frivolous; she reads more than most girls of her age, and she is accomplished; but our minds seem to be cast in different moulds. Or perhaps, as you say, it is that her mind is still unformed," he replied.

"I am sure it is that. The truth is, Mr. Tempest, as you and I are discovering, it is only a woman ripe in judgment who can really satisfy a man's natural desire for intellectual sympathy; and it is only the cultivated mind of a man who can respond to a woman's longing

for mental stimulants. Alas! for us both, it has pleased God to deprive us of these things; but He has 'tempered the wind to the shorn lamb,' and left us the inestimable boon of friendship."

And here Mrs. Jamieson made a feint of drying her fine eyes with a deep black-bordered handkerchief. She didn't explain who was the lamb to whom the wind had been tempered. Whether she or Mr. Ryot Tempest, or both, represented that much-quoted animal was left for him to decide. But though her simile might have been far-fetched, she was conscious that her last speech had been a telling one; for when Mr. Tempest took his leave, he pressed her hand in both of his in the most friendly, not to say affectionate, fashion.

"Come and see me again soon; you have done me so much good. I was feeling very sad when you arrived, and I shall look forward anxiously to another talk."

These were her parting words, to which Mr. Ryot Tempest warmly responded.

A fortnight later Mr. Ryot Tempest paid another visit to Mrs. Jamieson, during which it transpired that she would always be at home to him on Saturday afternoons: and from that time it became a habit with him to ride over and spend an hour or two every Saturday afternoon with this handsome widow. He never asked Vera to accompany him, nor did he think it necessary to tell her where he went; and not being curious or suspicious, it never occurred to her to inquire.

Indeed, as the autumn advanced, Vera's mind was much occupied in anticipating Captain Raleigh's promised visit; added to which she was much interested in Janet, of whose trouble with regard to Mark Brown she had been accidentally made aware. Mark had never been a favourite of Vera's, and when they returned from Avranches, it struck her that he was by no means improved. The other servants complained to her that his temper, never good, was now almost unbearable; and he had grown so slovenly in his work and appearance that at last Vera called her father's attention to it.

Now, in Mr. Tempest's eyes, Mark was a paragon of perfection, who could hardly do wrong, so the result of Vera's complaint was to bring on a fit of domestic energy called by the servants "the fidgets," to which Mr. Ryot Tempest was periodically liable. On these occasions he ransacked the house from attic to basement to the distraction of the women-servants; instituting a general sweeping and dusting and burning of rubbish, and having no visible effect beyond making everyone in the house from himself downwards cross and uncomfortable.

On the present occasion he was so far impressed with the reasonableness of Vera's complaint that, having inaugurated a house-cleaning at home, he set Mark to turn out a loft over the coach-house, in which all kinds of rubbish had been thrown, and to ensure its being done thoroughly, he superintended it himself.

Among the odds and ends, Mark came across an old horse-pistol, which, as soon as his master had finally departed, he took down to the harness-room to examine and clean, for it was very rusty. Mark, however, soon polished it up, and to his delight found it was all right. Clumsy as it was, it would have been sufficient to kill a better man than Mark. He had, however, at present no murderous designs in view; he merely wanted to intimidate Janet into marrying him with it; and, if the sight of it was insufficient, to fire a cap and a little powder, which would, he hoped, be more effective eloquence than his most impassioned language had hitherto proved.

This happened in October, and a few days later Mr. Tempest and Vera being out, Mark put the pistol in his pocket, and strolled up the lane towards Reuben's cottage, meaning to waylay Janet, whom he had seen go down to the village earlier in the afternoon, and who would, he knew, return in time to have the blacksmith's tea ready for him when he came up from the forge. As he expected, just as it was beginning to get dusk Janet returned, and was by no means pleased when Mark, who was lurking behind a low fence, advanced and accosted her. It was only a narrow lane, a mere bridle-path, and Janet found she could not get on any further, unless Mark chose to let her; which he was not inclined to do, until he had had his say at any rate.

"You needn't be in such a hurry, Janet. I have not seen you to speak to for I don't know how long, and as you know well enough I have plenty to say."

"I can't stop now, Mark. Father will be home before I have got his tea ready."

"He won't be home for another hour," said Mark coolly. "And now look here, Janet; once for all I want you to give me your answer. I love you madly, and you know it. You couldn't find a better husband than me if you were to go to New York for him, and you know that, too. Now, Janet, there is nothing you could ask me for that I would not give you if you'll only have me. Once more I ask you—and mind it is for the last time, Janet—will you marry me?"

"No, Mark, I can't. I have given you my answer over and over again," replied Janet.

"Yes, but that isn't the answer I mean to have. I mean you to say yes. Marry you, I will."

"Mark, it is impossible. Don't keep me here any longer, please. I am very sorry, but I don't love you, and I never could," said Janet, hoping to kill all latent hope in Mark's bosom, especially since he had told her it was the last time he should ask her.

"Very well, Janet; you see this pistol; I'll give you till I have counted forty—and if you don't say yes by then, I blow my brains out before your eyes. One—two," and as he spoke, Mark produced the horse-pistol.

Janet was really dreadfully alarmed, but she had plenty of nerve

and self-control, so she answered in a firm voice, though she turned a shade paler.

"Don't be a fool, Mark. If you think to frighten me, you are mistaken; I don't believe the pistol is loaded."

"Twenty-one—twenty-two," continued Mark doggedly, not deigning to answer her remark.

Janet looked to see if she could get past him, but unless she turned round and went down the hill, she could not escape without a struggle. At that moment, to her delight, she heard a horse's hoofs coming up the narrow lane, and as few people rode in this path except Vera and Mr. Tempest she rightly guessed it to be one of them. It was indeed Vera returning from a ride. Mr. Tempest had gone on the pony to see Mrs. Jamieson, so she could not have taken Mark had she wished as they had only two horses—the pony Mr. Tempest rode and drove, and Vera's own little thoroughbred. But she rarely took Mark when out riding, as she disliked him. Moreover, she was a first-rate rider, had no fear of tramps, and cared nothing for conventionalities.

"Here comes your master or Miss Vera; pray have done with this foolery, Mark," said Janet.

"Thirty-eight—thirty-nine—forty," continued Mark, and at the word forty he pointed the pistol towards his own red head and fired, giving Janet a reproachful leer before he pulled the trigger.

Simultaneously with the report of the pistol, Mark fell down into the fence apparently a dead man, and Janet, horrified, gave a loud cry for help and caught hold of the stone wall on the opposite side of the lane to support herself, for her knees sank under her, and it was only by a great effort she prevented herself from fainting.

It was at this critical juncture that Vera appeared upon the scene.

(*To be continued.*)

In Memoriam.

FEBRUARY 10, 1887.

How shall we mourn thee, gifted one,
How best extol thy deathless fame?
Who, like the glorious setting sun,
A golden halo round thy name,
Sank into rest:
In brighter worlds to rise again
Crowned with the blest.

How few among the author train
Can writings show as pure as thine;
The chaste creations of thy brain
As fair untrodden snow will shine
Years hence, as now:
Immortal, as the wreath we twine
Around thy brow.

A thousand lives owe thee their birth,
A thousand scenes of joy and woe;
Thou couldst at will provoke our mirth,
Or bid our tears of sorrow flow;
Alas! that we,
Thy lov'd remains in earth laid low,
Must weep for thee!

The busy fingers never more
Will scatter stores of "golden grain,"
Thy triumphs won, thy trials o'er,
Peace to thy memory: not in vain
Thy life was spent;
Thy heart's best thoughts with us remain—
Thy years were lent.

M. J. R.

FEATHERSTON'S STORY.

AT THE MAISON ROUGE.

"WHERE *can* Nancy be?"

Miss Preen spoke these words to Mary Cardiac in a sort of flurry. After letting themselves into the house, the petite Maison Rouge, and calling up and down it in vain for Nancy, the question as to where she could be naturally arose.

"She must be spending the evening with the friends she stayed to dine with," said Madame Cardiac.

"I don't know where she would be likely to stay. Unless—yes—perhaps at Mrs. Hardy's."

"That must be it, Lavinia," pronounced Madame Cardiac.

It was then getting towards nine o'clock. They set out again for Mrs. Hardy's to escort Nancy home. She lived in the Rue Lothaire; a long street, leading to the railway station.

Mrs. Hardy was an elderly lady. When near her door they saw her grand-nephew, Charles Palliser, turn out of it. Charley was a good-hearted young fellow, the son of a rich merchant in London. He was staying at Sainteville for the purpose of acquiring the art of speaking French as a native.

"Looking for Miss Ann Preen!" cried he, as they explained in a word or two. "No, she is not at our house; has not been there. I saw her going off this evening by the six o'clock train."

"Going off by the six o'clock train!" echoed Miss Lavinia, staring at him. "Why, what do you mean, Mr. Charles? My sister has not gone off by any train."

"It was in this way," answered the young man, too polite to flatly contradict a lady. "Mrs. Hardy's cousin, Louise Soubitez, came to town this morning; she spent the day with us, and after dinner I went to see her off by the train. And there, at the station, was Miss Ann Preen."

"But not going away by train," returned Miss Lavinia.

"Why, yes she was. I watched the train out of the station. She and Louise Soubitez sat in the same compartment."

A smile stole to Charles Palliser's face. In truth he was amused at Miss Lavinia's consternation. It suddenly struck her that the young man was joking.

"Did you speak to Ann, Mr. Charles?"

"Oh, yes; just a few words. There was not time for much conversation; Louise was late."

Miss Preen felt a little shaken.

"Was Ann alone?"

"No; she was with Captain Fennel."

And, with that, a suspicion of the truth and the full horror of it dawned upon Lavinia Preen. She grasped Madame Cardiac's arm and turned white as death.

"It never can be," she whispered, her lips trembling; "it never can be! She cannot have—have—run away—with that man!"

Unconsciously perhaps to herself, her eyes were fixed on Charles. He thought the question was put to him, and answered it.

"Well—I—I'm afraid it looks like it, as she seems to have said nothing to you," he slowly said. "But I give you my word, Miss Preen, that until this moment that aspect of the matter never suggested itself to me. I supposed they were just going up the line together for some purpose or other; though in fact I hardly thought about it at all."

"And perhaps that is all the mystery!" interposed Madame Cardiac briskly. "He may have taken Ann to Drecques for a little jaunt, and they will be back again by the last train. It must be almost due, Lavinia."

With one impulse they turned to the station, which was near at hand. Drecques, a village, was the first place the trains stopped at on the up-line. The passengers were already issuing from the gate. Standing aside until all had passed, and not seeing Nancy anywhere, Charley Palliser looked into the omnibuses. But she was not there.

"They may have intended to come back and missed the train, Miss Preen; it's very easy to miss a train," said he in his good nature.

"I think it must be so, Lavinia," spoke up Madame Cardiac. "Anyway we will assume it until we hear to the contrary. And, Charley, we had better not talk of this to-night."

"*I* won't," answered Charley earnestly. "You may be sure of me."

Unless Captain Fennel and Miss Ann Preen chartered a balloon, there was little probability of their reaching Sainteville that evening, for this had been the last train. Lavinia Preen passed a night of discomfort, striving to hope against hope, as the saying runs. Not a very wise saying; it might run better striving to hope against despair.

When Sunday did not bring back the truants, or any news of them, the three in the secret, Mary Cardiac, Lavinia and Charley Palliser, had little doubt that the disappearance meant an elopement. M. Jules Cardiac, not easily understanding such an escapade, so little in accordance with the customs and manners of his own country, said, in his wife's ear, he hoped it would turn out that there was a marriage in the case.

Miss Preen received a letter from Dover pretty early in the week written by Ann. She had been married that day to Captain Fennel.

Altogether, the matter was the most bitter blow ever yet dealt to Lavinia Preen. No living being knew, or ever would know, how cruelly her heart was wrung by it. But, being a kindly woman of good sound sense, she saw that the best must be made of it, not the worst; and this she set herself out to do. She began by hoping that her own instinct, warning her against Captain Fennel, might be a mistaken one, and that he had a good home to offer his wife and would make her happy in it.

She knew no more about him—his family, his fortune, his former life, his antecedents—than she knew of the man in the moon. Major Smith perhaps did; he had been acquainted with him in the past. Nancy's letter, though written the previous day, had been delivered by the afternoon post. As soon as she could get dinner over, Lavinia went to Major Smith's. He lived at the top of the Rue Lambeau, a street turning out of the Grande Place. He and his wife, their own dinner just cleared away, were sitting together, the Major indulging in a steaming glass of schiedam and water flavoured with a slice of lemon. He was a very jolly little man, with rosy cheeks and a bald head. They welcomed Miss Lavinia warmly. She, not quite as composed as usual, opened her business without preamble; her sister Ann had married Captain Fennel, and she had come to ask Major Smith what he knew of him.

"Not very much," answered the Major.

There was something behind his tone, and Lavinia burst into tears. Compassionating her distress, the Major offered her a comforting glass, similar to his own. Lavinia declined it.

"You will tell me what you know," she said; and he proceeded to do so.

Edwin Fennel, the son of Colonel Fennel, was stationed in India with his regiment for several years. He got on well enough, but was not much liked by his brother officers: they thought him unscrupulous and deceitful. All at once, something very disagreeable occurred, which obliged Captain Fennel to quit Her Majesty's service. The affair was hushed up, out of consideration to his family and his father's long term of service. "In fact, I believe he was allowed to retire, instead of being cashiered," added the Major, "but I am not quite sure which it was."

"What was it that occurred—that Captain Fennel did, to necessitate his dismissal?" questioned Lavinia.

"I don't much like to mention it," said the Major shaking his head. "It might get about, you see, Miss Preen, which would make it awkward for him. I have no wish, or right either, to do the man a gratuitous injury."

"I promise you it shall not get about through me," returned Lavinia; "my sister's being his wife will be the best guarantee for that. You must please tell me, Major Smith."

"Well, Fennel was suspected—detected, in short—of cheating at cards."

Lavinia drew a deep breath. "Do you know," she said presently, in an undertone, "that when I first met the man I shrank from his face."

"Oh my! And it has such nice features!" put in Mrs. Smith, who was but a silly little woman.

"There was something in its shifty look which spoke to me as a warning," continued Lavinia. "It did, indeed. All my life I have been able to read faces, and my first instinct has rarely, if ever, deceived me. Each time I have seen this man since, that instinct against him has become stronger."

Major Smith took a draught of his schiedam. "I believe—between ourselves—he is just a mauvais sujet," said he. "He has a brother who is one, out and out; as I chance to know."

"What is Edwin Fennel's income, Major?"

"I can't tell at all. I should not be surprised to hear that he has none."

"How does he live then?" asked Lavinia, her heart going at a gallop.

"Don't know that either," said the Major. "His father is dead now and can't help him. A very respectable man, the old Colonel, but always poor."

"He cannot live upon air; he must have some means," debated Lavinia.

"Lives upon his wits perhaps; some men do. He wanted to borrow ten pounds from me a short time ago," added the Major, taking another sip at his tumbler; "but I told him I had no money to lend—which was a fact. I have an idea that he got it out of Charley Palliser."

The more Lavinia Preen heard of this unhappy case, the worse it seemed to be. Declining to stay for tea, as Mrs. Smith wished, she betook her miserable steps home again, rather wishing that the sea would swallow up Captain Fennel.

The next day she saw Charles Palliser. Pouncing upon him as he was airing his long legs in the Grande Place, she put the question to him in so determined a way that Charley had no chance against her. He turned red.

"I don't know who can have set that about," said he. "But it's true, Miss Preen. Fennel pressed me to lend him ten pounds for a month; and I—well, I did it. I happened to have it in my pocket, you see, having just cashed a remittance from my father."

"Has he repaid you, Mr. Charles?"

"Oh, the month's not quite up yet," cried Charley. "Please don't talk of it, Miss Preen; he wouldn't like it, you know. How on earth it has slipped out I can't imagine."

"No, I shall not talk of it," said Lavinia, as she wished him good-

day and walked onwards, wondering what sort of a home he meant to provide for Ann.

Lavinia Preen's cup of sorrow was not yet full. A morning or two after this she was seated at breakfast, with the window open, when she saw the postman come striding across the yard with a letter. It was from the bride; a very short letter, and one that Miss Lavinia did not at once understand. She read it again.

"My dear Lavinia,—All being well, we shall be home to-morrow; that is, on the day you receive this letter; reaching Sainteville by the last train in the evening. Please get something nice and substantial for tea, Edwin says, and please see that Flore has the bedroom in good order. Your affectionate sister,

"Ann Fennel."

The thing that Miss Lavinia did, when comprehension came to her, was to fly into a passion.

"Come home here; *he*; is that what she means?" cried she. "Never. Have that man in my house? Never, never."

"But what has Mademoiselle received?" exclaimed Flore, appearing just then with a boiled egg. "Is it bad news?"

"It is news that I will not put up with, will not tolerate," cried Miss Lavinia. And, in the moment's dismay, she told the woman what it was.

"Tiens!" commented Flore, taking a common-sense view of matters: "they must be coming just to show themselves to Mademoiselle on their marriage. Likely enough they will not stay more than a night or two, while looking out for an apartment."

Lavinia did not believe it; but the very suggestion somewhat soothed her. To receive that man even for a night or two, as Flore put it, would be to her most repugnant, cruel pain, and she resolved not to do it. Breakfast over, she carried the letter and her trouble to the Rue Pomme Cuite.

"But I am afraid, Lavinia, you cannot refuse to receive them," spoke Madame Cardiac, after considering the problem.

"Not refuse to receive them!" echoed Lavinia. "Why do you say that?"

"Well," replied Mary Cardiac uneasily, for she disliked to add to trouble, "you see the house is as much Ann's as yours. It was taken in your joint names. Ann has the right to return to it; and also, I suppose"—more dubiously—"to introduce her husband into it."

"Is that French law?"

"I think so. I'll ask Jules when he comes home to dinner. Would it not be English law also, Lavinia?"

Lavinia was feeling wretchedly uncomfortable. With all her plain common-sense, this phase of the matter had not struck her.

"Mary," said she—and there stopped, for she was seized with

a violent shiver; which seemed difficult to be accounted for. "Mary, if that man has to take up his abode in the house, I can never stay in it. I would rather die."

"Look here, dear friend," whispered Mary: "life is full of trouble—as Job tells us in the Holy Scriptures—none of us are exempt from it. It attacks us all in turn. The only one thing we can do is to strive to make the best of it, under God; to ask Him to help us. I am afraid there is a severe cross before you, Lavinia; better *bear* it than fight against it."

"I will never bear *that*," retorted Lavinia, turning a deaf ear in her anger. "You ought not to wish me to do so."

"And I would not if I saw anything better for you."

Madame Veuve Sauvage, sitting as usual at her front window that same morning, was surprised at receiving an early call from her tenant, Miss Preen. Madame handed her into her best crimson velvet fauteuil, and they began talking.

Not to much purpose, however; for neither very well understood what the other said. Lavinia tried to explain the object of her visit, but found her French was not equal to it. Madame called her maid, Mariette, and sent her into the shop below to ask M. Gustave to be good enough to step up.

Lavinia had gone to beg of them to cancel the agreement for the little house, so far as her sister was concerned, and to place it in her name only.

Monsieur Gustave, when he had mastered the request, politely answered that such a thing was not practicable; Miss Ann's name could not be struck out of the lease without her consent, or, as he expressed it, break the bail. His mother and himself had every disposition to oblige Miss Preen in any way, as indeed she must know, but they had no power to act against the law.

So poor Miss Lavinia went into her home wringing her hands in despair. She was perfectly helpless.

II.

THE summer days went on. Mr. Edwin Fennel, with all the impudence in the world, had taken up his abode in the petite Maison Rouge, without saying with your leave or by your leave.

"How could you *think* of bringing him here, Ann?" Lavinia demanded of her sister in the first days.

"I did not think of it; it was he thought of it," returned Mrs. Fennel in her simple way. "I feared you would not like it, Lavinia; but what could I do? He seemed to look upon it as a matter of course that he should come."

Yes, there he was; "a matter of course;" making one in the home. Lavinia could not show fight; he was Ann's husband and

he place was as much Ann's as hers. The more Lavinia saw of him he more she disliked him; which was perhaps unreasonable, since e made himself agreeable to her in social intercourse, though he ook care to have things his own way. If Lavinia's will went ne way in the house and his the other, she found herself smilingly et at naught. Ann was his willing slave; and when opinions differed he sided with her husband.

It was no light charge, having a third person in the house to live pon their small income, especially one who studied his appetite. For a very short time Lavinia, in her indignation at affairs generally, urned the housekeeping over to Mrs. Fennel. But she had to take o it again. Ann was naturally an incautious manager; she ordered n delicacies to please her husband's palate without regard to cost, and nothing could have come of that but debt and disaster.

That the gallant ex-Captain Fennel had married Ann Preen just o have a roof over his head, Lavinia felt as sure of as that the moon occasionally shone in the heavens. She did not suppose he had any ther refuge in the wide world. And through something told her y Ann she judged that he had believed he was doing better for imself in marrying than he had done.

The day after the marriage Mr. and Mrs. Fennel were sitting on a ench at Dover, romantically gazing at the sea, honeymoon fashion, nd talking of course of hearts and darts. Suddenly the bridegroom urned his thoughts to more practical things.

"Nancy, how do you receive your money — half-yearly or uarterly?" asked he.

"Oh, quarterly," said Nancy. "It is paid punctually to us by the cting trustee, Colonel Selby."

"Ah, yes. Then you have thirty-five pounds every quarter."

"Between us we do," assented Nancy. "Lavinia has seventeen ounds ten, and I have the same; and the Colonel makes us each ive a receipt for our own share."

Captain Fennel turned his head and gazed at her with a hard stare.

"You told me your income was a hundred and forty pounds a year."

"Yes, it is that exactly," said she, quietly; "mine and Lavinia's ogether. We do not each have that, Edwin; I never meant to mply ——"

Mrs. Fennel broke off, frightened. On the Captain's face, cruel enough just then, there sat an expression which she might have thought iabolical had it been anyone else's face. Anyway, it scared her.

"What is it?" she gasped.

Rising rapidly, Captain Fennel walked forward, caught up some ebbles, flung them from him and waited, apparently looking to see here they fell. Then he strolled back again.

"Were you angry with me?" faltered Nancy. "Had I done any-hing?"

"My dear, what should you have done? Angry?" repeated he, in

a light tone as if intensely amused. "You must not take up fancies, Mrs. Fennel."

"I suppose Mrs. Selby thought it would be sufficient income for us, both living together," remarked Nancy. "If either of us should die it all lapses to the other. We found it quite enough last year, I assure you, Edwin; Sainteville is so cheap a place."

"Oh, delightfully cheap," agreed the Captain.

It was this conversation that Nancy repeated to Lavinia; but she did not speak of the queer look which had frightened her. Lavinia saw that Mr. Edwin Fennel had taken up a wrong idea of their income. Of course the disappointment angered him.

An aspect of semi-courtesy was outwardly maintained in the intercourse of home life. Lavinia was a gentlewoman; she had not spoken unpleasant things to the Captain's face, or hinted that he was a weight upon the housekeeping pocket; while he, as yet, was quite officiously civil to her. But there was no love lost between them; and Lavinia could not divest her mind of an undercurrent of conviction that he was, in some way or other, a man to be dreaded.

Thus Captain Fennel (as he was mostly called) being domiciled with the estimable ladies in the petite Maison Rouge, grew to be considered one of the English colony of Sainteville and was received as such. As nobody knew aught against him, nobody thought anything. Major Smith had not spoken of antecedents, neither had Miss Preen; the Cardiacs, who were in the secret, never spoke ill of anyone: and as the Captain could assume pleasing manners at will, he became fairly well liked by his country people in a passing sort of way.

Lavinia Preen sat one day upon the low edge of the pier, her back to the sun and the sea. She had called in at the little shoe shop on the port, just as you turn out of the Rue Tessin, and had left her parasol there. The sun was not then out in the grey sky, and she did not miss it. Now that the sun was shining and the grey canopy above had become blue, she said to herself that she had been stupid. It was September weather, so the sun was not unbearable.

Lavinia Preen was thinner; the thraldom of the past three months had made her so. Now and then it would cross her mind to leave the petite Maison Rouge to its married inmates; but for Nancy's sake she hesitated. Nancy had made the one love of her life, and Nancy had loved her in return. Now, the love was chiefly given to the new tie she had formed; Lavinia was second in every respect.

"They go their way now, and I have to go mine," sighed Lavinia as she sat this morning on the pier. "Even my walks have to be solitary."

A cloud came sailing up and the sun went in again. Lavinia rose; she walked onwards till she came to the end of the pier, where she again sat down. The next moment, chancing to look the way she had come, she saw a lady and gentleman advancing arm-in-arm.

"Oh, *they* are on the pier, are they!" mentally spoke Lavinia. For it was Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Fennel.

Nancy sat down beside her. "It is a long walk!" cried she, drawing a quick breath or two. "Lavinia, what do you think we have just heard?"

"How can I tell?" returned the elder sister.

"You know those queer people, an old English aunt and three nieces, who took Madame Gibon's rooms in the Rue Ménar? They have all disappeared and have paid nobody," continued Nancy. "Charley Palliser told us just now; he was laughing like anything over it."

"I never thought they looked like people to be trusted," remarked Lavinia. "Dear me! here's the sun coming out again."

"Where is your parasol?"

Lavinia recounted her negligence in having left it at the shoe mart. Captain Fennel had brought out a small silk umbrella; he turned from the end of the pier, where he stood looking out to sea, opened the umbrella and offered it.

"It is not much larger than a good-sized parasol," remarked he. "Pray take it, Miss Lavinia."

Lavinia did so after a moment's imperceptible hesitation, and thanked him. She hated to be under the slightest obligation to him, but the sun was now full in her eyes and might make her head ache.

The pleasant smell of a cigar caused them to look up. A youngish man, rather remarkably tall, with a shepherd's plaid across his broad shoulders, was striding up the pier. He sat down near Miss Preen, and she glanced round at him. Appearing to think that she looked at his cigar, he immediately threw it into the sea behind him.

"Oh, I am sorry you did that," said Lavinia, speaking impulsively. "I like the smell of a cigar."

"Oh, thank you; thank you very much," he answered. "I had nearly smoked it out."

Voice and manner were alike pleasant and easy, and Lavinia spoke again—some trivial remark about the fine expanse of sea; upon which they drifted into conversation. We are reserved enough with strangers at home, we Islanders, as the world knows, but most of us are less ungracious abroad.

"Sainteville seems a clean, healthy place," remarked the newcomer.

"Very," said Miss Lavinia. "Do you know it well?"

"I never saw it before to-day," he replied. "I have come here from Douai to meet a friend, having two or three days to spare."

"Douai is a fine town," remarked Captain Fennel, turning to speak, for he was still looking out over the sea and had his opera-glasses in his hand. "I spent a week there not long ago."

"Douai?" exclaimed Nancy. "That's the place where the great law courts are, is it not? Don't you remember the man last year, Lavinia, who committed some dreadful crime, and was taken up to Douai to be tried at the Assizes there?"

"We have a great case coming on there as soon as the Courts meet," said the stranger, who seemed a talkative man; "and that's what I am at Douai for. A case of extensive swindling."

"You are a lawyer, I presume," said Miss Preen.

The stranger nodded. "Being the only one of our London firm who can speak French readily, and we are four of us in it, I had to come over and watch this affair and wait for the trial. For the young fellow is an Englishman, I am sorry to say, and his people, worthy and well-to-do merchants, are nearly mad over it."

"But did he commit it in England?" cried Miss Preen.

"Oh, no; in France; within the arrondissement of the Douai Courts. He is in prison there. I daresay you get some swindling in a pretty way even at Sainteville," added the speaker.

"That we do," put in Nancy. "An English family of ladies ran away only yesterday, owing twenty pounds at least, it is said."

"Ah," said the stranger with a smile. "I think the ladies are sometimes more clever at that game than the men. By the way," he went on briskly, "do you know a Mr. Dangerfield at Sainteville?"

"No," replied Lavinia.

"He is staying here, I believe, or has been."

"Not that I know of," said Lavinia. "I never heard his name."

"Changed it again probably," carelessly observed the young man.

"Is Dangerfield not his true name, then?"

"Just as much as it is mine, madam. His real name is Fennel; but he has found it convenient to drop that on occasion."

Now it was a curious fact that Nancy did not hear the name which the stranger had given as the true one. Her attention was diverted by some men who were working at the mud in the harbour, for it was low water, and who were loudly disputing together. Nancy had moved to the side of the pier to look down at them.

"Is he a swindler, that Mr. Dangerfield?" asked she, half turning her head to speak. But the stranger did not answer.

As to Lavinia, the avowal had struck her speechless. She glanced at Captain Fennel: he had his back to them, and stood immovable, apparently unconcerned, possibly not having heard. A thought struck her—and frightened her.

"Do you know that Mr. Dangerfield yourself?" she asked the stranger, in a tone of indifference.

"No, I do not," he said, "but there's a man coming over in yonder boat who does."

He pointed over his shoulder at the sea as he spoke. Lavinia glanced quickly in the same direction. "In yonder boat?" she repeated vaguely.

"I mean the London boat, which is on its way here and will get in this evening," he explained.

"Oh, of course," said Lavinia, as if her wits had been gathering wool.

The young man took out his watch and looked at it. Then he rose, lifted his hat, and with a general good-morning, walked quickly down the pier.

Nancy was still at the side of the pier, looking down at the men. Captain Fennel put up his glasses and sat down beside Lavinia, his impassive face still as usual.

"I wonder who that man is?" he cried, watching the footsteps of the retreating stranger.

"Did you hear what he said?" asked Lavinia, dropping her voice.

"Yes. Had Nancy not been here, I should have given him a taste of my mind, but she hates even the semblance of a quarrel. He had no right to say what he did."

"What could it have meant?" murmured Lavinia.

"It meant my brother, I expect," said Captain Fennel savagely, and, as Lavinia thought, with every appearance of truth. "But he has never been at Sainteville, so far as I know; the fellow is mistaken in that."

"Does he pass under the name of Dangerfield?"

"Possibly. This is the first I've heard of it. He is an extravagant man, often in embarrassment from debt. There's nothing worse against him."

He did not say more; neither did Lavinia. They sat on in silence. The tall figure in the Scotch plaid disappeared from sight; the men in the harbour kept on disputing.

"How long are you going to stay here?" asked Nancy, turning towards her husband.

"I'm ready to go now," he answered. And giving his arm to Nancy, they walked down the pier together.

Never a word to Lavinia; never a question put by him or by Nancy, if only to say "Are you not coming with us?" It was ever so now. Nancy, absorbed in her husband, neglected her sister.

Lavinia sighed. She sat on a little while longer, and then took her own departure.

The shoe shop on the port was opposite the place in the harbour where the London steamers were generally moored. The one now there was taking in cargo. As Lavinia was turning into the shop for her parasol, she heard a stentorian English voice call out to a man on board who was superintending the work in his shirt-sleeves: "At what hour does this boat leave to-night?"

"At eight o'clock, sir," was the answer. "Eight sharp; we want to get away with the first o' the tide."

From Miss Lavinia Preen's Diary.

September 22nd.—The town clocks have just struck eight, and I could almost fancy that I hear the faint sound of the boat steaming down the harbour in the dark night, carrying Nancy away with it, and carrying *him*. However, that is fancy and nothing else, for the sound could not penetrate to me here.

Perhaps it surprised me, perhaps it did not, when Nancy came to me this afternoon as I was sitting in my bedroom reading Scott's "Legend of Montrose," which Mary Cardiac had lent me from her little stock of English books, and said she and Captain Fennel were going to London that night by the boat. He had received a letter, he told her, calling him thither. He might tell Nancy that if he liked, but it would not do for me. He is going, as I can only believe, in consequence of what that gentleman in the shepherd's plaid said on the pier to-day. Can it be that the "Mr. Dangerfield" spoken of applies to Edwin Fennel himself and not to his brother? Is he finding himself in some dangerous strait, and is running away from the individual coming over in the approaching boat, who personally knows Mr. Dangerfield? "Can you lend me a five-pound note, Lavinia?" Nancy went on, when she had told me the news; "lend it to myself, I mean. I will repay you when I receive my next quarter's income, which is due you know in a few days." I chanced to have a five-pound note by me in my own private store, and I gave it her, reminding her that unless she did let me have it again, it would be so much less in hand to meet expenses with, and that I had found difficulty enough in the past quarter. "On the other hand," said Nancy, "if I and Edwin stay away a week or two, you will be spared our housekeeping; and when our money comes, Lavinia, you can open my letter and repay yourself if I am not here. I don't at all know where we are going to stay," she said, in answer to my question. "I was beginning to ask Edwin just now in the other room, but he was busy packing his portmanteau, and told me not to bother him."

And so, there it is: they are gone, and I am left here all alone.

I wonder whether any Mr. Dangerfield has been at Sainteville? I think we should have heard the name—— Why, that is the door bell! I must go and answer it.

It was Charley Palliser. He had come with a message from Major and Mrs. Smith. They are going to Drecques to-morrow morning by the eleven o'clock train with a few friends and a basket of provisions, and had sent Charley to say they would be glad of my company. "Do come, Miss Preen," urged Charley as I hesitated; "you are all alone now, and I'm sure it must be dreadfully dull."

"How do you know I am alone?" I asked.

"Because," said Charley, "I have been watching the London boat out, and I saw Captain Fennel and your sister go by it. Major and Mrs. Smith were with me. It is a lovely night."

"Wait a moment," I said, as Charley was about to depart when I had accepted the invitation. "Do you know whether an Englishman named Dangerfield is living here?"

"Don't think there is; I have not met with him," said Charley. "Why, Miss Preen?"

"Oh, only that I was asked to-day whether I knew anyone of that name," I returned carelessly. "Good-night, Mr. Charles. Thank you for coming."

They have invited me finding I was left alone, and I think it very kind of them, but the Smiths are both kind-hearted people.

September 23rd.—Half-past nine o'clock, p.m. Have just returned from Drecques by the last train after spending a pleasant day. Quiet, of course, for there is not much to do at Drecques except stroll over the ruins of the old castle, or saunter about the quaint little ancient town, and go into the grand old church. It was so fine and warm that we had dinner on the grass, the people at the cottage bringing out plates and knives and forks. Later in the day we took tea indoors. In the afternoon when all the rest were scattered about, and the Major sat smoking his cigar on the bench under the trees, I sat down by him to tell him what happened yesterday, and I begged him to give me his opinion. It was no betrayal of confidence, for Major Smith is better acquainted with the shady side of the Fennels than I am.

"I heard there was an English lawyer staying at the Hôtel des Princes, and that he had come here from Douai," observed the Major. "His name's Lockett. It must have been he who spoke to you on the pier."

"Yes, of course. Do you know, Major, whether anyone has stayed at Sainteville passing as Mr. Dangerfield?"

"I don't think so," replied the Major. "Unless he has kept himself remarkably quiet."

"Could it apply to Captain Fennel?"

"I never knew that he had gone under an assumed name. The accusation is one more likely to apply to his brother than to himself. James Fennel is unscrupulous, very incautious: notwithstanding that, I like him better than I like the other. There's something about Edwin Fennel that repels you; at least it does me; but one can hardly help liking James, mauvais sujet though he is," added the speaker, pausing to flirt off the ashes of his cigar.

"The doubt pointing to Edwin Fennel in the affair is his suddenly decamping," continued Major Smith. "It was quite impromptu, you say, Miss Preen?"

"Quite so. I feel sure he had no thought of going away in the morning; and he did not receive any letter from England later,

which was the excuse he gave Nancy for departing. Rely upon it that what he heard about the Mr. Dangerfield on the pier drove him away."

"Well, that looks suspicious, you see."

"Oh, yes, I do see it," I answered, unable to conceal the pain I felt. "It was a bitter calamity, Major Smith, when Nancy married him."

"I'll make a few cautious inquiries in the town and try to find out if there's anything against him in secret, or if any man named Dangerfield has been in the place and got into a mess. But, indeed, I don't altogether see that it could apply to him," concluded the Major after a pause. "One can't well go under two names in the same town; and everyone knows him as Edwin Fennel.——Here they are some of them coming back!" And when the wanderers were close up, they found Major Smith arguing with me about the architecture of the castle.

Ten o'clock. Time for bed. I am in no haste to go, for I don't sleep as well as I used to sleep.

A thought has lately sometimes crossed me that this miserable trouble worries me more than it ought to do. "Accept it as your cross, and *yield* to it, Lavinia," says Mary Cardiac to me. But I *cannot* yield to it; that is, I cannot in the least diminish the anxiety which always clings to me, or forget the distress and dread that lie upon me like a shadow. I know that my life has been on the whole an easy life, that during all the years I spent at Selby Court I never had any trouble; I know that crosses do come to us all, earlier or later, and that I ought not to be surprised that "no new thing has happened to me," the world being full of such experiences. I suppose it is because I have been so exempt from care, that I feel this the more.

Half-past ten! just half-an-hour writing these last few lines and *thinking!* Time I put up. I wonder when I shall hear from Nancy?

III.

A CURIOUS phase, taken in conjunction with what was to follow, now occurred in the history. Miss Preen began to experience a nervous dread at going into the petite Maison Rouge at night.

She could go into the house ten times a day when it was empty; she could stay in the house alone in the evening after Flore took her departure; she could be its only inmate all night long; and never at these times have the slightest sense of fear. But if she went out to spend the evening, she felt an unaccountable dread, amounting to horror, at entering it when she arrived home.

It came on suddenly. One evening when Lavinia had been at Mrs. Hardy's, Charley Palliser having run over to London, she returned home a little before ten o'clock. Opening the door with her latch-key, she was stepping into the passage, when a sharp horror of entering it seized her. A dread, as it seemed to her, of going into

the empty house, up the long, dark, narrow passage. It was the same sort of sensation which had struck her the first time she attempted to enter it under the escort of M. Gustave Sauvage, and it came on now with as little reason as it had come on then. For Lavinia this night had not a thought in her mind of fear or loneliness, or anything else unpleasant. Mrs. Hardy had been relating a laughable adventure that Charley Palliser met with on board the boat when going over, the account of which he had written to her, and Lavinia was thinking brightly of it all the way home. She was smiling to herself as she unlatched the door and opened it. And then, without warning, arose the horrible fear.

How she conquered it sufficiently to enter the passage and reach the slab, where her candle and matches were always placed, she did not know. It had to be done, for Lavinia Preen could not remain in the dark yard all night, or patrol the streets; but her face had turned moist, and her hands trembled.

That was the beginning of it. Never since had she come home in the same way at night but the same terror assailed her; and I must beg the reader to understand that this is no invention. Devoid of reason and unaccountable though the terror was, Lavinia Preen experienced it.

She went out often—two or three times a week, perhaps—either to dine or to spend the evening. Captain Fennel and Nancy were still away, and friends, remembering Miss Preen's solitary position, invited her.

October had passed, November was passing, and as yet no news came to Lavinia of the return of the travellers. At first they did not write to her at all, leaving her to infer that as the boat reached London safely, they had done the same. After the lapse of a fortnight, she received a short letter from Nancy, telling her really nothing, and not giving any address. The next letter came towards the end of November, and was as follows:

"My dear Lavinia,—I have not written to you, for, truly, there is nothing to write about, and almost every day I expect Edwin to tell me we are going home. Will you *kindly* lend me a ten-pound note? Please send it in a letter. We are staying at Camberwell, and I enclose you the address in strict confidence. Do not repeat it to anyone—not even to Mary Cardiac. It is a relation of Edwin's we are staying with, but he is not well off. I like his wife. Edwin desires his best regards. Your loving sister,

"Nancy."

Miss Preen did not send the ten-pound note. She wrote to tell Nancy that she could not do it, and was uncomfortably pressed for money herself in consequence of Nancy's own action.

The five-pound note borrowed from Lavinia by Nancy on her departure had not been repaid; neither had Nancy's share of the

previous quarter's money been remitted. On the usual day of payment at the end of September, Lavinia's quarterly income came to her at Sainteville, as was customary; not Nancy's. For Nancy there came neither money nor letter. The fact was, Nancy, escorted by her husband, had presented herself at Colonel Selby's bank—he was junior partner and manager of a small private bank in the City—the day before the dividends were due, and personally claimed the quarterly payment, which was paid to her.

But now, the summary docking of just half their income was a matter of embarrassment to Miss Preen, as may readily be imagined. The house expenses had to go on, with only half the money to meet them. Lavinia had a little nest-egg of her own, it has been said before, saved in earlier years; and this she drew upon, and so kept debt down. But it was very inconvenient, as well as vexatious. Lavinia told the whole truth now to Mary Cardiac and her husband, with Nancy's recent application for a ten-pound note, and her refusal. Little M. Cardiac muttered a word between his closed lips which sounded like "Rat," and was no doubt applied to Edwin Fennel.

Pretty close upon this, Lavinia received a blowing-up letter from Colonel Selby. Having known Lavinia when she was in pinafores, the Colonel, a peppery man, considered he had a right to take her to task at will. He was brother to Paul Selby, of Selby Court, and heir presumptive to it. The Colonel had a wife and children, and much ado at times to keep them, for his income was not large at present, and growing-up sons are expensive.

"Dear Lavinia,—What in the name of common-sense could have induced you to imagine that I should pay the two quarterly incomes some weeks before they were due, and to send Ann and that man Fennel here with your orders that I should do so? Pretty ideas of trusteeship you must have! If you are over head and ears in debt, as they tell me, and for that reason wish to forestall the time for payment, *I* can't help it. It is no reason with me. Your money will be forwarded to Sainteville, at the proper period, to *yourself*. Do not ask me again to pay it into Ann's hands, and to accept her receipt for it. I can do nothing of the kind. Ann's share will be sent at the same time. She tells me she is returning to you. She must give me her own receipt for it, and you must give yours.

"Your affectionate kinsman,

"William Selby."

Just for a few minutes Lavinia Preen did not understand this letter. What could it mean? Why had Colonel Selby written it to her? Then the truth flashed into her mind.

Nancy (induced, of course, by Edwin Fennel) had gone with him to Colonel Selby, purporting to have been sent by Lavinia, to ask him to pay them the quarter's money not due until the end of December, and not only Nancy's share but Lavinia's as well.

"Why, it would have been nothing short of swindling!" cried Lavinia, as she gazed in dismay at the Colonel's letter.

In the indignation of the moment, she took pen and ink and wrote an answer to William Selby. Partly enlightening him; not quite; but telling him that her money must never be paid to anyone but herself, and that the present matter had better be hushed up for Ann's sake, who was as a reed in the hands of the man she had married.

Colonel Selby exploded a little when he received this answer. Down he sat in his turn, and wrote a short, sharp note to Edwin Fennel, giving that estimable man a little of his mind, and warning him that he must not be surprised if the police were advised to look after him.

When Edwin Fennel received this decisive note through an address he had given to Colonel Selby, but not the one at Camberwell, he called Miss Lavinia Preen all the laudatory names in the thieves' dictionary.

And on the feast of St. Andrew, which as everyone knows is the last day of November, the letters came to an end with the following one from Nancy:

"All being well, my dear Lavinia, we purpose to return home by next Sunday's boat, which ought to get in before three o'clock in the afternoon. On Wednesday, Edwin met Charley Palliser in the Strand, and had a chat with him, and heard all the Sainteville news; not that there seemed much to hear. Charley says he runs over to London pretty often now, his mother being ill. Of course you will not mind waiting dinner for us on Sunday.

"Ever your loving sister,

"Ann."

So at length they were coming! Either that threat of being looked after by the police had been too much for Captain Fennel, or the failure to obtain funds was cutting short his stay in London. Anyway, they were coming. Lavinia laid the letter beside her breakfast plate and fell into thought. She resolved to welcome them graciously, and to say nothing about bygones.

Flore was told the news, and warned that instead of dining at half-past one on the morrow, the usual Sunday hour, it would be delayed until three. Flore did not much like the prospect of her afternoon's holiday being shortened, but there was no help for it. Lavinia provided a couple of ducks for dinner, going into the market after breakfast to buy them; the dish was an especial favourite of the Captain's. She invited Mary Cardiac to partake of it, for M. Cardiac was going to spend Sunday at Lille with an old friend of his, who was now master of the College there.

On this evening, Saturday, Lavinia dined out herself. Some adies named Bosanquet, three sisters, with whom she had become

pretty intimate, called at the little Maison Rouge, and carried her off to their home in the Rue Lamartine, where they had lived for years. After a very pleasant evening with them, Lavinia left at ten o'clock.

And when she reached her own door, and was putting the latch-key into the lock, the old dread fear came over her. Dropping her hands, she stood there trembling. She looked round at the silent, deserted yard, she looked up at the high encircling walls; she glanced at the frosty sky and the bright stars; and she stood there shivering.

But she must go in. Throwing the door back with an effort of will, she turned sick and faint: to enter that dark, lonely, empty house seemed beyond her strength and courage. What could this strange feeling portend?—why should it thus attack her? It was just as if some fatality were in the house waiting to destroy her, and a subtle power would keep her from entering it.

Her heart beating wildly, her breath laboured, Lavinia went in; she shut the door behind her and sped up the passage. Feeling for the match-box on the slab, put ready to her hand, she struck a match and lighted the candle. At that moment, when turning round, she saw, or thought she saw, Captain Fennel. He was standing just within the front door, which she had now come in at, staring at her with a fixed gaze, and with the most malignant expression on his usually impassive face. Lavinia's terror partly gave place to astonishment. Was it he himself? How had he come in?

Turning to take the candle from the slab in her bewilderment, when she looked again he was gone. What had become of him? Lavinia called to him by name, but he did not answer. She took the candle into the salon, though feeling sure he could not have come up the passage; but he was not there. Had he slipped out again? Had she left the door open when thinking she closed it, and had he followed her in, and was now gone again? Lavinia carried her lighted candle to the door, and found it was fastened. She had *not* left it open.

Then, as she undressed in her room, trying all the while to solve the problem, an idea crept into her mind that the appearance might have been supernatural. Yet—supernatural visitants of the living do not appear to us, but of the dead. Was Edwin Fennel dead?

So disturbed was the brain of Lavinia Preen that she could not get to sleep; but tossed and turned about the bed almost until daybreak. At six o'clock she fell into an uneasy slumber, and into a most distressing dream.

It was a confused dream; nothing in it was clear. All she knew when she awoke was that she had appeared to be in a state of inexplicable terror, of most intense apprehension throughout it, arising from some evil threatened her by Captain Fennel.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

BRUSSELS. JUNE, 1815.

By the Hon. Mrs. Armytage.

THERE are three ladies still living among us who can recall many details of those eventful days when the Battle of Waterloo was fought, the heavy cannonading almost within sound, as they pursued their daily tasks in a quaint old house in the Rue de la Blanchisserie at Brussels. More than this, these three ladies are sisters, and are the sole survivors of the thirteen children of Charles, Fourth Duke of Richmond.

As they sit by their quiet firesides and muse of the long years past and gone, what memories of those days must flit across their minds in this year 1889, as some chance word or inquiry brings back to their thoughts those bright June days seventy-three years ago, when the large family party were gathered round the Duke and Duchess. With faithful memory they relate much that is interesting, and we look with wonder at these octogenarians, and think of the thrilling events with which their young lives were once so closely associated.

At the time when the peace of Europe had been disturbed by the re-appearance of Napoleon, the Duke and Duchess of Richmond were settled in Brussels living in that house, the site of which has lately been so fully discussed.

Three of the Duke's sons were already holding commissions in the army. Lord March, Lord George and Lord William. The latter, very lately gazetted to the Blues, met with a bad accident while staying at the Château d'Enghien with the Duke of Wellington ; an accident which prevented his being present at the Battle of Waterloo, and occasioned the loss of the sight of one eye. The great Duke was an intimate friend, so that military enthusiasm was found in every member of the family.

The Duke and Duchess of Richmond mixed in all the society of Brussels, and often entertained at their own house. Three of the Ladies Lennox were of an age to take part in any festivities, and *Lodge's Peerage* tells that the second daughter, Lady Sarah, was married a very few months after Waterloo was fought to one who had distinguished himself in that action, one of the Duke's staff officers.

All the researches lately discussed as to the exact situation of the House have only proved its utter destruction, and that no traces of the old house exist. Even the large chestnut trees have been cut down. But in 1815 it stood in its own grounds, with fruit and flower garden reaching to the city ramparts ; but the ladies alluded to are clear in their recollections of the plan of the rooms, and distinctly deny the idea (propounded by someone) that the

famous "Waterloo Ball" was given in a coach-builder's store-room. For they can tell of the Porte Cochère through which they passed to the garden entrance; of another approach to the hall, passing by the stables, with their recollection of the position of billiard-room, dining-room and their father's study, passing up a few steps to the long room appropriated as a schoolroom for the younger branches of the family, and which they are all equally certain was the actual apartment used as a ball-room upon this eventful evening.

It was certainly no "high hall" with windowed niche, but a long narrow room with windows on the side facing the stables. No doubt the ball had been arranged some time, and the great Duke had no wish that it should be postponed on account of the reported approach of the French army, though many English families had been frightened into retreating from Brussels, and post-horses were kept harnessed in readiness at the Duke of Richmond's stables in case bad news from the scene of conflict should make it advisable for the children to be sent to Antwerp.

A large number of our troops were already out of reach, the Guards were at Enghien, and few, if any, of the officers could have obtained leave to attend the ball.

The nearest neighbours in Brussels appear to have been violent Bonapartists, and were prepared to entertain Napoleon in great style, when he had successfully forced the British army to retreat and should himself enter the Belgian capital in triumph. Lord Byron's lines in "Childe Harold" are so engraven on men's minds that it was long believed that the ball actually took place on the 17th of June, and that the orders for the route were delivered in the very midst of the festivities. Not so. It was on the 15th of June; and as the guests arrived and passed through the hall and on to the ball-room, so the evening went on without a panic of any sort.

Certainly, while merry couples were flying round, a despatch reached the Duke of Wellington from the front, and he asked his host for a private room where he could speak to one or two of the generals who were present. The Duchess's dressing-room was the only convenient apartment safe from intrusion. Candles were hastily lit on the dressing-table at which the Duke sat with a map of the country before him, and having explained certain points to his staff, they all re-joined the company and left the house without attracting any remark.

Very few indeed, if any, guessed how near the crisis was which should decide the fate of Europe; and it never entered into the minds of the happy girls as they danced so gaily that to many of their partners it might possibly be the very last dance they would ever enjoy.

Lady Georgina is the only sister still living who was grown up then, whilst Lady Louisa and Lady Sophia were only old enough to look on as children while their elder sisters danced all night. Of

these three sisters all are now widows, Lady Georgina having married the late Lord de Ros, a gallant soldier, who distinguished himself in the Crimean campaign. Lady Louisa is the widow of Mr. Tighe, of Woodstock, an Irish landlord, whose memory is still loved and respected all through the county of Kilkenny. Lady Sophia married the late Lord Thomas Cecil, who held a commission in the 10th Hussars.

From the lips of these ladies we gather these interesting reminiscences. How they remember the soldier brother's farewell on the day after the ball (Lord George's charger was killed under him at Waterloo), with recollections of the anxiety felt by all on the following day. How the news of the great victory speedily reached the Duchess, her husband having ridden out to see how the battle raged, having witnessed the splendid charge of English troops which decided the day and scattered the proud Imperial Guard.

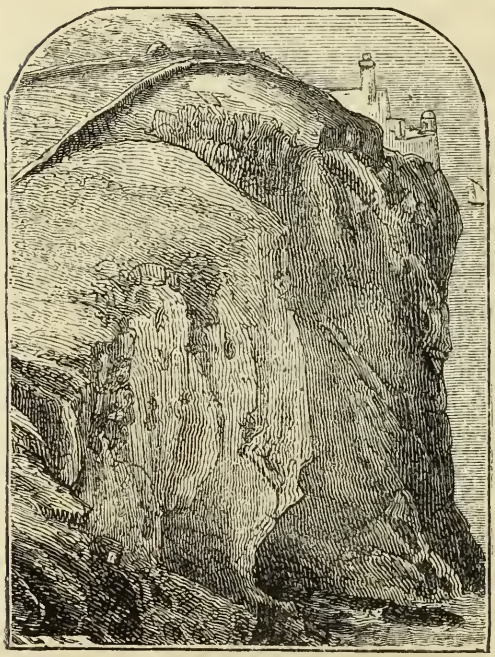
Too well can they remember seeing rough country carts coming slowly into town carrying wounded men to the hospitals, the accommodation supplemented by lace merchants and city people giving up rooms and warehouses for their reception, whilst the little ladies were soon permitted to take dainty nourishment and little comforts to the disabled heroes of Waterloo.

A visit of congratulation to the great commander is also impressed on the mind as they went with the Duchess to see the Duke a few days after, for her children were his special favourites; and they recall that his face was sad and his words sorrowful as he spoke of the loss of so many gallant men. Then, ere long, a visit to the battlefield and a glance at the Château of Houguemont, with purchase of real relics as they were collected from the fragments of shot and shell, and shattered remnants of cavalry and infantry accoutrements. Then the great day of public thanksgiving, when the Prince of Orange at the head of all his troops marched through Brussels and into the cathedral for a Service of Praise, and the Te Deum was sung by a hundred voices for deliverance from the foe, Lord March (their brother) standing close to the Prince, whose A.D.C. he was. Then a few more weeks, and the arrival of the famous story-telling historian and novelist is an event not to be forgotten, as Sir Walter Scott appears a guest at the Duke of Richmond's table, determined to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the details of the campaign for his "Life of Napoleon."

Thus, though stones and buildings have disappeared, and no trace of house or garden be left, the recollections of living actors in the scenes recall to those who are privileged to listen all the painful excitement of those days gone by at Brussels in 1815.

A DAY AT MALTA.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Letters from Majorca," etc.



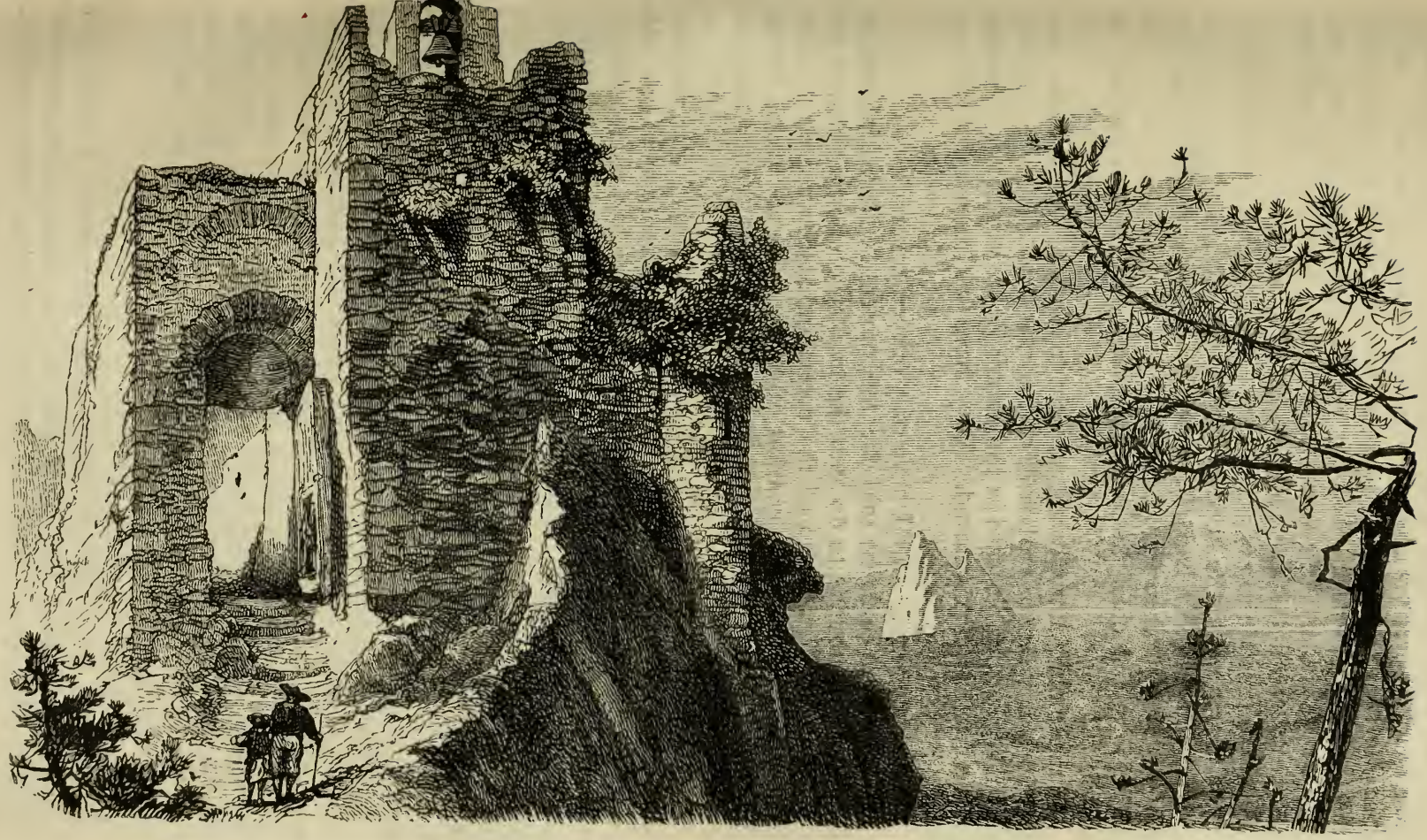
Europa Point.

WE left Gibraltar "as the clocks were striking the hour," though it was not the midnight hour. The strains of the military band on the Alameda grew faint and fainter yet; the lights died out; very soon the outlines of the gigantic rock could no longer be traced. We ploughed our course through the wide waste. In due time we passed through the Straits, and once more were on the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean: to see whose shores, said Dr. Johnson, was the great object of travelling. I don't know whether he would have said so had he lived in these days; but it is doubtful whether any other shores can equal them.

It was Monday night and we were due at Malta on the Friday morning. During the intervening days we should touch nowhere; see very little of the Egyptian coast and nothing of the European. In the course of our journey we should at one moment pass not far from our dear Palma de Mallorca. If only we could bribe the Captain to put in for an hour or two, that we might once more gaze upon the grand outlines of the Cathedral, revisit some of our favourite Courts, give the *Bon jour* to good old Don Negro, and assure the fair Mallorquinas that H. C. was faithful to them!

It was not to be thought of. The Captain kept on his course as straight as an arrow from a bow. He would not budge a mile to right or left for a Jew's ransom, or even to be made Commodore of the P. and O. Service.

Two of our sextett had left us at Gibraltar. But as the judge remained, with all his humour, his strange experiences of human nature, his fund of anecdote, and his quaint and original views of life, we felt that we had still a great deal of social enjoyment before us. We were by no means abandoned, and not at all depressed.



Approaching Gibraltar, from Spanish Side.

But the next morning a shock awaited us. The head-steward, with a cruelty never yet attained to in the history of the world: without saying with your leave or by your leave, or giving us the smallest intimation of his treason: had removed our seats to the long and noisy centre table. Our own table had nothing but its ordinary after-breakfast, all-day-long red cloth upon it.

It was impossible to say much at the moment, but we did go up to the under-steward in the hope of a quiet explanation.

"Did you think we had *all* landed at Gibraltar? Why has our small table been taken from us?"

"It is by the chief-steward's directions, sir. I have nothing to do with it."

"But the chief-steward had no right to do this. Our places were settled when we came on board, and to shift us about in this way without asking our pleasure in the matter is to treat us very unfairly. No one else has been moved. Why have we been made the exception?"

"I am very sorry, sir. I have only obeyed orders."

Nothing more could be said for the present. The chief-steward has, of course, nothing to do with the *waiting* on board and was not in the saloon. He is head of the commissariat department. Upon him depends much of the comfort of the passengers: and it is only right to add that on few vessels would one fare better than on board the *Batavia*.

We sat down to breakfast in a frame of mind that I fear was not very happy or amiable. Our little coterie was broken up. All pleasant converse, all the fun and laughter we had so much enjoyed, was summarily put an end to. Four people all in a row can hardly keep up a conversation. Hitherto we had heard the Babel, but had been outside it, as it were; it had not affected us, except with a sort of agreeable feeling that we *were* outside it. Now we were in its very centre; and the crowd seemed as confusing as the noise. It was quite a study of character only to listen to the varieties of laughs round about us. For there is a very great deal in a laugh.

Opposite to us as fate would have it, sat an old lady who looked upon us as ogres, because two nights before, Mauleverer, in turning a large atlas he was consulting, had upset a glass of beer, which had just escaped her husband's knees, who was sitting at the same table. She herself was occupying a side seat, far out of danger. Nevertheless she sprang up as if a gun had suddenly gone off behind her, put on a severe expression, and marked her displeasure by dragging her husband to the other end of the saloon.

He protested.

"My dear, only a little accident. No harm done. I prefer *this* end of the saloon. The other end is too close to the stewards' quarters. Rattling of cups and saucers, popping of corks, much talk but little wit."

It was useless. He was evidently hen-pecked, and had to submit' From the other side the old lady glared at us for full five minutes. Mauleverer quietly ordered another supply of the golden beverage, and she looked as if she would like to punish him by pouring it into the sea and sending him after it. Had he been her better-half, no doubt this might have happened. "Is marriage a failure?" he whispered; and if the old lady had heard him, I doubt if his life would have been worth an hour's purchase.

This lady, from her imposing turban, her conscious air of being much wiser than her neighbours, and her magisterial way of laying down the law, had become "Minerva" to all on board, after the second day's sailing.

As we took our seats this morning, Minerva turned all the colours of the rainbow. Her hair bristled and her turban trembled. She glared at our breakfast cups, as if to ask whether they would share the fate of the overturned glass; and she gathered her skirts about her, and called her husband's attention to their perilous position.

This morning her *pro bono* conversation was all about servants; chiefly English servants. They were all as bad as they could be. She wouldn't trust one of them. The women all ran after the soldiers, and the soldiers were the most demoralised and demoralising set of men on the face of the globe. If the women were pretty they were no better than they ought to be, and if they were ugly they had unbearable tempers. Thank goodness she was going back to Malta. There if a soldier only came in sight of her territories, he had seven days' cell and a month's extra drill for his pains. Her husband was a magistrate, and there was a power behind the throne, etc. etc.

Next to her sat a lady who had amused us all through the voyage. Mauleverer called her Miss Lydia Languish, though she must have been well on in the forties, and might have passed very well for Miss Lydia's mamma. She posed and attitudinised all day long as if she were studying for Tableaux Vivants, and her upright airs and graces were an excellent foil to the Australian lady as she reclined in her opossum rugs and flashed her rings in the sunlight. Though apart from her little airs, which after all some people would have called pretty, the Australian was really very nice.

But Miss Languish was not nice, and her chief characteristic was her propensity for using all the long words contained in the dictionary with very little regard to quantity or meaning: so that to the virtues of the above-mentioned lady she added those of the no less celebrated Mrs. Malaprop.

This morning she had very little opportunity of indulging in her affection for long words—or short ones either. Minerva had possession of the ball of conversation and kept it. Miss C., the judge's daughter, sat next to me, and her father came next to her.

"So glad you have joined us!" cried Minerva to Miss C., as the latter took her seat at the table.

"Are you? We are not at all glad," replied Miss C. straightforwardly. "We much preferred our own table, and want to go back to it. I can't think why they have moved us. Papa is furious."

Minerva was slightly deaf, and across the table heard all this *à tort et à travers*. This no doubt accounted for her loud whispers to her husband. Deaf people shout and fancy they are using the most subdued tones.

"So glad you wanted to come," cried Minerva. "We are now just as we should be." And then she glared at us as much as to say that we had no part or lot in her congratulations and needn't think it.

"A most deleterious combination of circumstances," added Miss Languish, determined to get in a word edgeways, and upsetting a small jug of milk as she put it down with an air. "Dear me! Look at that! We must be rolling on foamy billows again, as we were in that meretricious bay!"

And in this way and after this manner of conversation breakfast dragged its slow length to an end. We had certainly had a good deal of fun, but of a different sort from the pleasures and interest of our own small table.

The judge after breakfast spoke very decidedly upon our having been moved, but obtained no redress, and gave the thing up as hopeless. This I felt would not do. We must have another struggle for victory. I "interviewed" the chief-steward, and after a due representation of the matter, we were once more reinstated in our old and favourite quarters. After this, all went merry as a marriage bell.

The days succeeded each other and brought little change with them. We had the wide blue waste of waters beneath us, the wide blue sky above. Occasionally we caught sight of the African coast; and here and there an ancient town, ruined and hoary looking as if it had existed since the foundation of the world, seemed to rise, phantom-like, from the hills. We passed successively the shores of Morocco, Algeria and Tunis. The ancient town of Bizerta, once belonging to the Arabs, but now, I believe, a French penal settlement, stood out conspicuously under the shelter of its rocky slopes. It, too, might have belonged to the days of Noah. Banishment here must indeed be a death in life.

There cannot be a great variety of occupation at sea, however ingenious the human brain may be at inventing new pleasures. So was it on board the *Batavia*. The days passed under the awnings in a pleasant, dreamy monotony.

One of the great amusements was in throwing rings into a bucket, and if it was not particularly intellectual, it seemed to serve the occasion, for it went on day after day, as regularly as luncheon or dinner. Cricket also went on at the farther end, apparently with great success, considering the limited area of the field. In the saloon the piano was generally tinkling under more or less skilful

O'Hara's Tower, Gibraltar.

hands—the lesser degree predominating; whilst in a corridor immediately below us, another piano was employed all the morning by one of the two young ladies given to flirting, who spent hours in struggling through Dorothy and the Mikado. Her voice was quite impossibly out of time and tune. Even our poor cabin-steward grew pale and thin under the daily torture. "All day long, sir, and every day," he said to me one morning, with a sigh and a voice that would have drawn tears from a stone. Her devoted cavalier of course turned the pages for her; but even his devotion cooled at last, when the fair prima donna suddenly found that her voice had been overstrained and needed repose.

But by far the pleasantest thing of all was to lie on deck in a long chair, with a favourite book, and pass the hours in that dreamy, lotus-eating existence, which, at certain times and under certain conditions, is such intense pleasure. It was sufficient only to watch the sky and the water; the intense blue; the flashing gleams as the ripples caught the sunlight; the birds that crossed our path; the horizon only now and then broken by some vessel speeding on her way.

Occasionally, especially at night, a mist would gather and blot out everything: the mist that so often creeps over the waters of the Mediterranean, though, fortunately, so quickly passes. As the moon waxed larger, the nights became more splendid, more full of a "divine effulgence." The piano was brought on deck, and under the blaze of the electric light, dancing would commence. But somehow, it was never carried on with enthusiasm. Perhaps the electric light was not favourable to flirting and the utterances of those sentimental nothings which lose all their charm under any light but that of the moon; and at the end of half-an-hour or so, the strains of Faust and the melodies of Waldteufel would languish and finally die away in silence.

Our own evenings were spent with the judge and his daughter, who initiated us into the mysteries of Euchre, an Australian game we had heard much of but never, until now, seen played. The right bower, the left bower, the little joker soon ceased to be mere curious terms: and under the influence of this mild dissipation (we played for love, not money) the hour of 10.30 would often surprise us with unpleasant emotion.

For at 10.30 the electric lights of the saloon were extinguished with a military precision which reflected great credit upon the staff of the vessel, but was not so agreeable to anyone else concerned. If you forgot the time and the light went out, you had to grope your way to your cabin as best you could. Often at 10.29 a flying figure and a fluttering of petticoats passed through the saloon, like Cinderella at the witching hour, as if it feared ghosts in the approaching darkness, or a return to rags and pumpkins. Once in your cabin light again shone upon you; half-an-hour's grace was allowed here, and darkness only fell at eleven.

At last came Friday morning, and very early on that morning, when most passengers were yet sleeping, we steamed into Malta's fine harbour.

There are in fact two harbours at Malta: the Great Harbour and the Quarantine Harbour; and the P. and O. boats anchor in the latter. Here they coal, and if the reader has never gone through the experience, he can have no idea of its ineffable delights. In a very short time you are covered with a fine, black, sparkling dust; your hands and face assume the complexion of the gentlemen who sweep your chimneys in England—a very lucrative profession, by the way: and every time you open your mouth you swallow so great a quantity, that you soon become a perambulating sack of combustible material.

There are few finer sights than entering Malta harbour, with its forts and fortifications, its grand sweep of water, the general disposition of the land, and its accumulation of white, eastern-looking buildings. The glare from these is often especially trying, for nowhere else does the sun seem to shine with such intense force. The streets are suffocating; the air comes straight upon you as if just wafted from some invisible furnace seven times heated.

No sooner had we dropped anchor, than the usual crowd swarmed on board, with specimens of every curiosity for sale that Malta contained. They were far more persistent than the men of Gibraltar, for here they would not be denied. They came down and down in their prices, until at last, you weakly bought an amount of useless impedimenta for the sake of peace and deliverance. Silver ornaments, coral, Maltese lace, images and animals in sculptured alabaster and marble: all these surrounded you in profusion. Fruit was abundant: the most luscious green figs, most delicious grapes. For a shilling we stocked our cabin with a supply that would have lasted an insatiable appetite for a week. We, who had less than two days for disposing of our bargain, enjoyed an unbroken Bacchanalian feast. Fortunately, it was the unfermented juice of the grape only.

We were only too glad to leave all these persistent merchants, the vessel with its coaling delights, for the less confined pleasures of the shore. But here, as the area was wider, so the temptations would be stronger and more numerous.

We were to have the whole day in Malta—the *Batavia* would sail again at 5 o'clock—and prepared to make the most of our liberty. Minerva was leaving for good, to take possession of her immaculate abode. We watched her go off in company with Miss Lydia Languish. The latter, however, was a passenger for New Zealand, and was only "out for the day," and her chaperon would take care that she did not elope with "the military," and perhaps, like the unfortunate Miss Bailey, come to a bad end.

It was quite a long row to the landing steps, and a very pleasant one under the awning of the boat, which was very picturesque and

seemed a sort of compromise between a modern gondola and an ancient Viking. Our boatman was a young Maltese, with well-shaped head and features, flashing eyes in which one would not care to waken the demon of revenge, and a skin as brown as a coffee berry. He was nearly naked, but the costume of Adam and Eve in Paradise here excites no surprise, and has no demoralising effect. It has also the advantage of economy; whilst no time is lost in superfluous dressing in the morning.

No sooner landed than we were besieged by guides wanting to show us everything that the island contained, and much that it did not contain. On the face of the globe there is no place like Malta for this annoyance. They will not be shaken off, these men. One certain Maltese will constitute himself your guardian and factotum, and in spite of all you can say, will follow you for hours all over the place. If you take a carriage to get out of his way he will run after it, fleet as a lamplighter. You might as well endeavour to escape from your own shadow as from his persistence.

We entered the deep archway, in which sat a blind beggar woman, five centuries old to all appearance. A long, crooked, uphill street leading up from the port to the town, by a succession of shallow steps. In the blazing sun and intense heat it is trying to mount this Jacob's ladder, but it is picturesque. The narrow side streets were full of charm and colouring, with their deep balconies. Some of the women going about look curious and interesting in their black silk cloaks that come below the waist, whilst the immense hood is drawn over the head and partially screens the face from observation. To see a group of them so dressed kneeling in church before a lighted altar is a singular, almost pitiable sight. They look like mourners in the last stage of misery; or weeping penitents being shriven for some mortal sin.

We soon found ourselves in the Strada Reale, the principal street of Valetta. Everything I had seen six years ago, I saw again to-day. Nothing was changed; all the old landmarks were there. The lace-shop of Messrs. P. P. Borg and Co., where we had spent a small fortune, rashly plunging into matters of which we knew little or nothing. And there was Mr. Borg himself at his door, looking not a day older, and more rotund and flourishing than ever. He had evidently continued to prosper. And—oh, miserie—I declare that he recognised me and was hastening across the road, with evidently evil intentions.

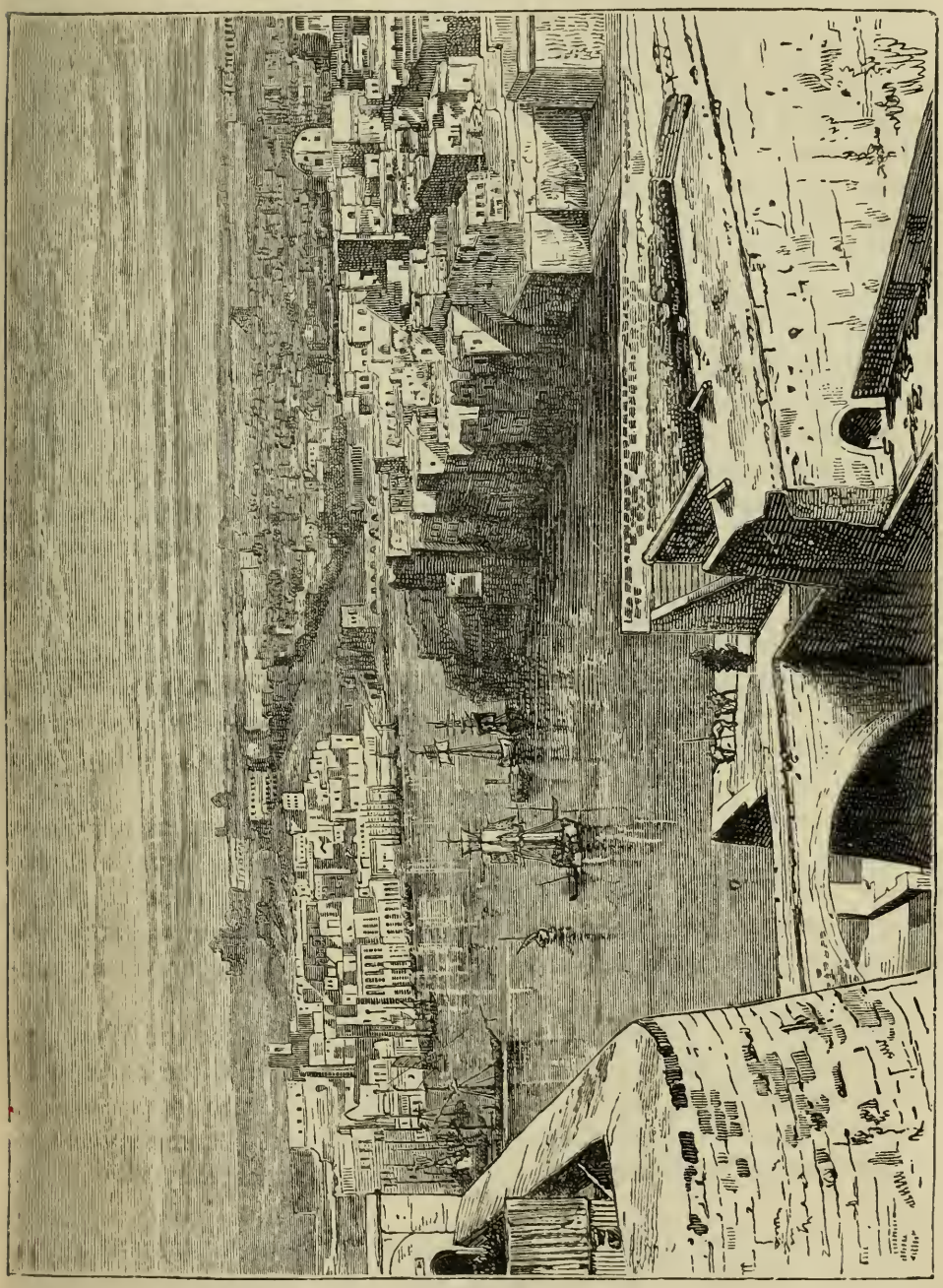
"Delighted to see you in Malta again, sir." (I should think so.) "Pray come in, I have something to show you, something very special."

"Not to day, Mr. Borg; it is quite useless. I have not come to Malta this time to buy lace or anything else."

"No, sir, no. I would not ask you to buy for the world. But come in and see this wonderful production. It is the exact counterpart of what we sent to the Glasgow Exhibition. I should like you to see it before anyone else."

Of course we hesitated, and of course were lost.

But Mauleverer likewise did not escape. He invested in unlimited cigars and cigarettes, bought two large boxes of each upon the assurance of Mr. Borg that we were allowed even more than that through



MALTA.

all the custom-houses in Europe, although we knew perfectly well that it was a —— mistake.

The trouble we had in the end. The successful smugglings, but the hair-breadth escapes. The manner in which I wasted away

under the anxiety, and the way in which Mauleverer smoked himself pale and ill day after day to reduce the risk and the quantity. I don't think he will forget it as long as he lives; I shall never even recover it.

Then further up the street came the Union Club, where we had almost lived at our previous visit. Yet beyond that the Opera House, where we had listened to "Faust," and very nearly forsworn music for ever after. Opposite that again was Truefitt's, which really made one feel quite in London, and brought the Burlington Arcade unpleasantly before one's mental vision. And just beyond was the old Porta Reale, with its statues of the Knights of St. John, and the drawbridge spanning the great dyke which runs from the Quarantine Harbour to the Great Harbour; a dyke nearly one thousand yards long, fifty-five feet deep, and thirty feet wide.

For this little island of Malta has gone through histories and vicissitudes, and belonged to many nations. It is simply a rock rising out of the sea, seventeen miles long, nine miles broad, and about sixty miles round. For its size, Valetta, the capital, is almost the most densely populated place in the world. Outside, in the country, the island looks nothing but a barren waste of rock and sand, bleached white and hard under the blazing sun. Hardly a tree meets the eye, or any green, or any sign of vegetation. And yet there is abundance of it, and Malta is really very fertile. The reason for this apparent contradiction is that nearly all vegetation, trees, fruits, cereals, is enclosed and concealed within high walls. Everything without the walls is destroyed by the influence of the sea air and spray. Within these walls vegetation is often singularly luxuriant and beautiful.

The history of Malta dates from very remote days; as remote as the expulsion of the Phœnicians from Canaan by Joshua, who are said to have been its first known settlers. Then came a colony of Greeks seven hundred years before the Christian era, and five hundred years later it fell into the hands of those universal conquerors, the Romans.

So it went on; belonging now to the East, now to the West; as if, situated at almost equal distances between the three great continents of the known world, each and all had a right to its possession.

At last came its most interesting epoch, when it became subject to the Knights of St. John, or Knights Hospitallers as they were often called.

Like many other great results the Order began in a very small way. A band of merchants from Amalfi founded a hospital and chapel at Jerusalem for the use of poor pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre: buildings dedicated to St. John the Baptist. After the capture of Jerusalem by Godefroi de Bouillon in 1099, the Order suddenly became famous. To its pacific attributes it was allowed to add a martial side, and take up arms in defence of its faith: and before many

years had passed, "the white cross banner of the Order of St. John had waved over many a field of strife."

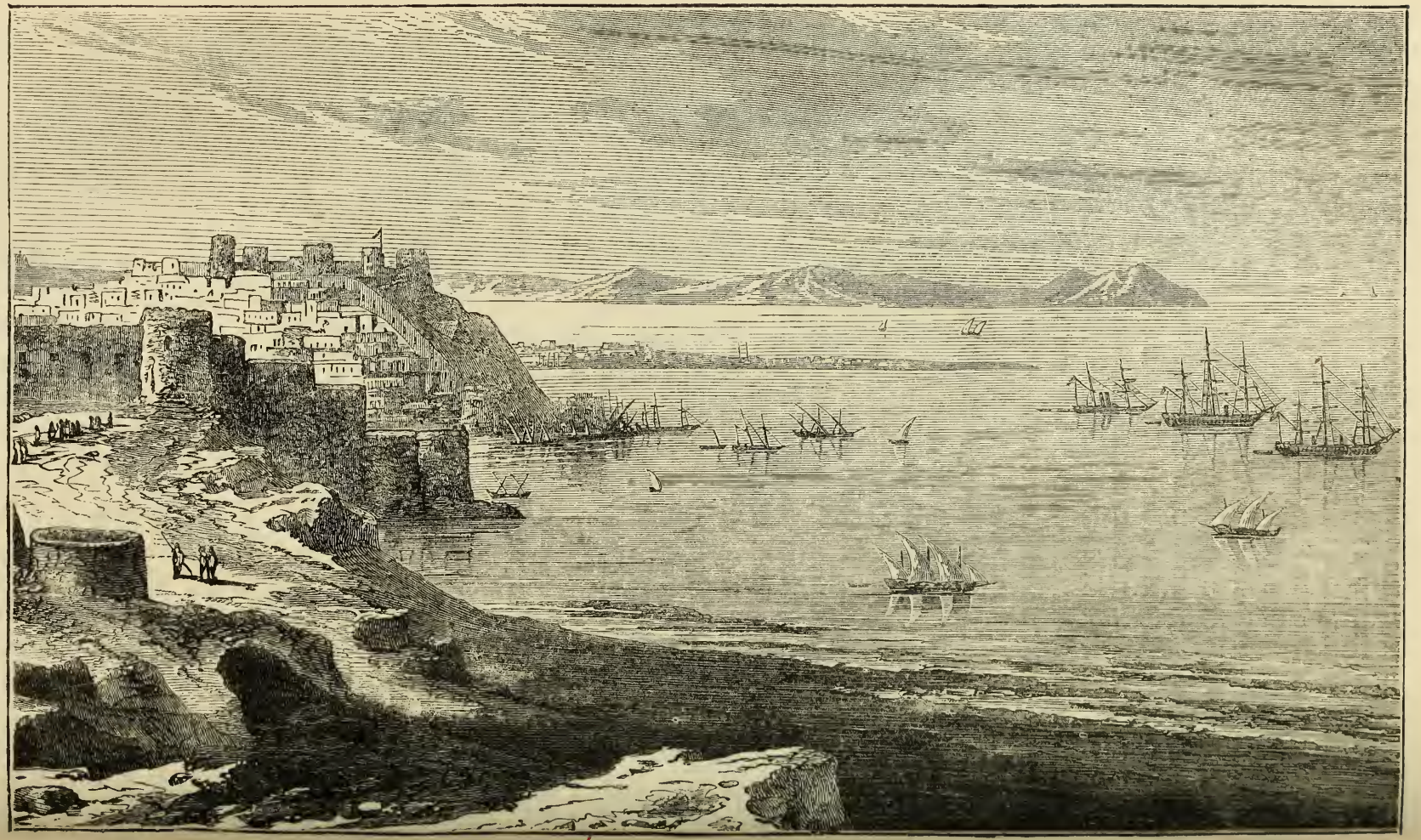
The Order was made up of three classes: the Knights of Justice, the Chaplains, and the Serving Brothers. The Rector was called the Grand Master. The Order grew wealthy and was represented in many of the chief cities of Europe. It was successively established in Acre and Rhodes; in which latter place it existed for over two hundred years. From thence the Knights were finally driven, after a desperate struggle and defence. They wandered about the world for seven years, and then finally settled at Malta.

In 1530 Charles V. gave the island to the Knights for ever. But other countries from time to time endeavoured to wrest it from them. In 1565 the Porte made its most desperate attack upon the island, with a fleet of 138 vessels and 40,000 men. The siege lasted four months and then they withdrew defeated. Out of 40,000 men only 10,000 remained; whilst on the side of the Knights, out of 9,000 men, only 600 were left who could carry arms. John de la Valette was the Grand Master. Conquerors, though almost destroyed, he rose to the occasion. He built a new city, which was called Valetta after his own name, and fortified the island. Other Grand Masters after him continued these fortifications, until it became one of the most renowned fortresses in the world.

The Knights of St. John did much for the island. They governed wisely and well. The people were happy and prosperous under their reign. This finally came to an end in 1798, when the French, under Bonaparte, seized Malta. Under their rule the inhabitants were so oppressed that at last an insurrection took place. Malta underwent the miseries of another siege; and after two years the French were starved out and surrendered.

In 1814 the island passed to the English, in whose possession it has remained.

There are few traces of all these vicissitudes in the Malta of to-day, yet one feels their influence. Few ancient buildings, and no churches of any beauty or importance exist, the church of St. John excepted. The foundation stone of this was laid in 1573, under the reign of Grand Master de la Cassière. For many years riches were heaped upon it, people outrivalling each other in the profuseness of their gifts. The exterior is surmounted by the Maltese Cross. The interior is gorgeous with every species of decoration. The pavement consists of costly marbles of many colours. The altar is of lapis lazuli, enriched by gold and silver work. Heavy gold and silver candelabra decorate the altar and suspend from the roof. The roof itself is magnificently painted, displaying a succession of scenes taken from the Scriptures. The pillars between the nave and the side chapels are enriched with gilding. Above these hang a series of magnificent and costly tapestries. The crypt is called the Chapel of the Crucifixion, and twelve of the Grand Masters lie here, including L'Isle



MOUTH OF THE HARBOUR, MALTA

Adam and la Valette. The sarcophagi of the two latter were opened when Queen Adelaide visited Malta, and the bodies were found to be embalmed.

The Chapel of San Carlo contains most of the sacred relics, including a thorn from the crown placed on the head of our Saviour; one of the stones with which St. Stephen was martyred; the right foot of Lazarus; and some of the bones of the Apostles and Thomas A'Beckett.

The church formerly contained the reputed right hand of St. John the Baptist, said to have been brought from Antioch to Constantinople by the Emperor Justinian; whence it eventually found its way to Rhodes, and from thence was brought to Malta by L'Isle Adam. It was encased in a glove of gold, richly set with gems. Many offerings surrounded it: amongst others a large diamond ring, which Napoleon, on taking Malta, transferred to his own finger; whilst the hand was carried away to Russia, and is now in the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg.

It was a strange and abrupt transition to go from this rich and costly building to the poor and very ugly Church of the Monks. Down in the crypt we saw them, these miserable creatures, who, though dead, have never been buried, propped up in niches, ghastly skeletons, wearing for shroud the cloaks they had worn in life. It was a horrible and depressing sight. One of them was placed behind an iron grating, as if he had been more precious than the others, and we asked the reason. It was, said the Brother who accompanied us, because people who came would cut a piece of his garment to carry away as a memento.

We were glad to escape back into pure air and sunshine, though the heat and the intense glare were almost unbearable as we went out into the country to see the garden of the Palace of S. Antonio, the Governor's summer residence, given up for the present to the Duke of Edinburgh. On our way it was occasionally necessary to shut one's eyes from the dazzling and blinding effect of the sun. Neither horse nor driver, however, seemed to feel it. The horse, indeed, went at a tremendous rate and kept it up for hours without turning a hair.

On reaching the residence we entered a long avenue between two high dead walls, which terminated in a paved courtyard. Beyond this was the famous garden.

It was indeed a charming and refreshing sight after the apparent sterility of the island. The garden was large and crowded with trees of every description, some of which were new and unknown to us. Orange and lemon trees were in abundance; a few specimens of the pepper tree; the graceful linden; the kharoub, with its hanging fruit or vegetable—which is it? for it seems to partake of the nature of both. Unseen cicalas apparently in millions kept up their incessant and curious noise. And what puzzled us, and always does puzzle us, is the way in which they all begin chirping and grating together, and

all leave off at the very same instant. One moment the air is full of a sound more or less distracting until you grow used to it; the next moment complete silence "falls upon the listening ear."

Lower down, steps led to a terrace where was a basin in which gold fish disported. And if fish are to envied at all, surely it is here, where they exist in perpetual cool waters. Immense butterflies—almost as large as one's hand—of the brightest and most gorgeous colours, flew from bush to bush, from flower to flower. Gigantic bushes of flaming geraniums and the more delicate plumbago scattered their beauty and perfume—as did the fruit-laden orange trees. We picked up and eat an orange that lay upon the ground. Although pale and still unripe, its scent and flavour were exquisite, and reminded one of the oranges of Majorca. But in Majorca the trees grow to a much larger size. Here they were all small; because, said the gardener, they grow too quickly to perfection, and want more soil. Over all was the intense, burning sky, whilst the air seemed literally painted with sunshine.

It was like passing out of Paradise to leave this garden and set out upon our barren drive to Valetta. The garden had been luxuriant and lovely beyond description; but now not a tree or shrub was to be seen; not a bird to be heard. Most of the birds in Malta are migratory; and some make merely a resting place of the island as they journey eastward or westward.

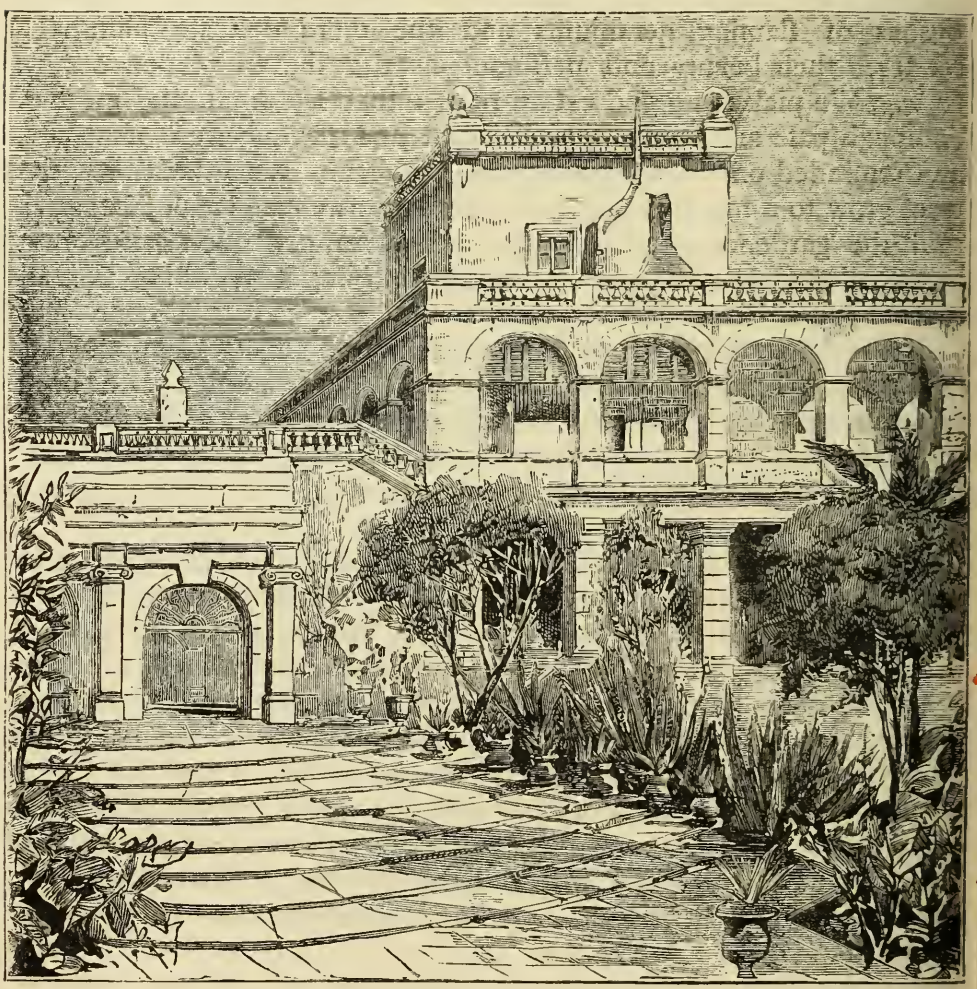
Re-entering Valetta, from the different bastions we obtained a matchless view. Far down lay the harbours, with their impregnable forts, that of St. Angelo standing out conspicuously. The sun flashed upon the waters. Boats with their awnings flitted about in search of prey. Steamers were at anchor; our own good old *Batavia* still in the agonies of coaling. We could almost fancy we heard the periodical avalanche, see the clouds of dust flying. Cabin doors and port-holes were, of course, all hermetically closed: not only to keep out the dust, but other insidious intruders who occasionally make a mistake, enter, and, seized with a slight obfuscation of intellect, carry away other people's possessions under the impression that they are their own.

At our feet lies the lower part of the town—so far down that you quite shudder as you look into the depths. Peacocks are strutting about in areas so confined that the poor birds have no chance of gratifying their pride and spreading their tails.

Nothing can be more Eastern-looking than the scene. Far away stretch the white houses with their flat roofs. For miles you can trace the Island, barren and rocky. Across there in the distance, the great hospital stands out conspicuously on its sandy height. Far out and around stretches the deep blue sea, always flashing in the sunlight. Round there is St. Paul's Bay, where the Apostle was shipwrecked, and of which he gives so graphic an account in the Acts. A statue was erected here to St. Paul in 1845. It is certain

that this bird's-eye view of Malta from the Bastions is one of the marvellous sights, one of the great panoramas of the world.

The streets were hotter than ever as we rattled through them to the Governor's Palace. Here there is a splendid collection of armour, which seems to represent all the eras and vicissitudes of the island. It is full of wonderful guns, shields aud helmets, whilst complete suits of armour once worn by the Knights of St. John stand in rows



PALACE OF SAN ANTONIO.

against the wall, and look something like the skeletons of the old monks in their mouldy crypt.

I once read a story of these old skeletons to the effect that a young fellow accompanying a lady into the crypt thought he would play her a practical joke, and quietly pinned her dress to a skeleton monk's cloak. As she moved away the hideous thing fell forward and its rattling arms enclosed her. But the shock and horror were too much for her and turned her brain. It nearly turned one's brain to read about it. The horror came back to me as I had looked at

them to-day. To have those horrible arms about you would surely be enough to scatter the strongest senses to the winds.

Amongst other relics in the Armoury of the Palace we noticed, carefully guarded under a glass case, the deed, dated March 24th, 1530, by which Charles V. made over the Island of Malta for ever to the Knights of St. John. Nothing, however, lasts for ever. The deed remains, but the knights of successive generations have gone to their last long rest, and the Order has become extinct.

The hours were passing and it was nearly time to return to the *Batavia*. The lazy natives hung about the streets, begging for largesse. Under the Arcades they were lying about in the abandonment of idleness. Little half-dressed boys, bare-legged, bare-footed, ran about trying to sell coins; others thrust flowers upon you which had scarcely half-an-hour's existence left in them. Anything to gain money, and have something to live upon until the next P. and O. boat came into port. Some of these little fellows were singularly handsome, with great dark flashing eyes full of merriment and mischief. It was impossible to resist them. One only regretted that the day would come when, grown to manhood, all their beauty would vanish, all their comparative innocence be left behind with childhood and youth.

The street cries of Malta had hardly begun. Here and there we came upon a water-seller, but he was quiet and depressed: custom seemed to fail him. It is at night that one hears the cries to perfection, up to one o'clock in the morning; and they begin again in full force at three, just as you have fallen into your first sleep. There is no place like Malta for doing penance for your sins. No horse-hair shirts or sheets are needed; you have little chance of rest even if reposing on a bed of roses. It is not a pleasant place to live in. Life becomes dreary and monotonous. I never yet found anyone, naval, military or civil, who did not hate it as a residence, and look upon it as banishment: a sort of penal servitude without the hard labour. But for a short visit, with all its brightness, all its associations, sacred, secular and historical, Malta is extremely interesting.

It had to be left to-day when four o'clock struck. We had settled up with Mr. Borg, who in the largeness of his heart and the excellence of his bargains, served us with some real coffee à la Turc. It was certainly very delicious. Then, followed by his factotum bearing our burden, we retraced our steps down the hilly street, passed under the archway where the blind old woman of five centuries still sat and begged, and easily found a boat at the steps. Again we took our seats under the awning, and were soon making quick way for the *Batavia*. The row upon the water was so pleasant that we wished it might last for hours.

It lasted only a few minutes, and we were once more on board. Coaling was over, but its signs remained. The ship had changed colour and become Ethiopian. On the water, in boats, a small

swarm of brown boys and men were diving for coins. They would not condescend to stir for a penny, but if anyone threw in sixpence they dived deep down after it, and came up with it between their glistening teeth. Sometimes a coin was thrown down the other side the vessel. Away they splashed, a dozen of them, dived right under the ship, and one was sure to come up on the other side with the sixpence in his mouth. In this way they made quite a small harvest.

But five o'clock struck, and with the last stroke the *Batavia*, punctual as ever, was in motion. We steamed out of the magnificent harbour between the forts, as much impressed as ever with their grandeur. Malta fell away. Once more we were ploughing the blue waters of the Mediterranean. Presently night fell, and the moon rose, and the stars came out, "proclaiming to the listening earth, the wondrous story of their birth."

AN EVENING PRIMROSE.

CALM Evening hushed the voices of the day,
And sang her lullabies from sea to sea,
Soothing the clamour of unrest away;
"Peace, peace!" she softly murmured unto me.

For ears attent she tender whispers gave
In wafted odours and in fitful breeze;
For he that hath—of heaven more shall have,
Who grasps a gift a further prize shall seize.

Within her hand a fragrant bloom was borne,
White and diaphanous and pure as snow,
Our faith's rude symbol at her heart was worn,
The fairest she of all the flowers that blow!

She spake in fragrance. Brief her hours and few,
She must be gone ere yet the day may break,
Her speech distilled amid the evening dew,—
I tarried in the gloaming for her sake.

One bud, by calyx clasped like hands in prayer,
Waited the call her glories to disclose;
When eve again stepped down her sunset stair,
The earth should hail another fragrant rose.

And thus hath morn and eve and sultry noon
A voice and symbol, every hour its sign.
Oh, to be learners of heaven's lavish boon,
Discerners of the speech which is divine!

CLARA THWAITES.

WAS IT A GHOST?

"OH, don't let us talk of ghosts any more," said our hostess "I have no patience with them. Idiotic beings! Wandering about at unseasonable hours, frightening inoffensive people out of their wits. I never yet heard of a ghost who was of use to anyone, or who had any good reason to show for its appearance."

Everyone laughed except one person, and she, like Viola in "Twelfth Night," said: "Ah! but I know—" and then, like Viola, paused. No one heard her except myself.

Mrs. Lester's remark seemed suddenly to have put to flight the "eerie" mood which a succession of ghost stories had encouraged in us. The circle round the tea-table broke up, and one after another sauntered from the drawing-room, till at last there remained only myself and another. The lights had not yet been brought in, and I could only see her face by the glow of the fire.

"Now, Mrs. Mantell," I said, carrying a chair up to take my place beside her. "Tell me what you know."

"About what?"

"About ghosts."

"Oh," said Mrs. Mantell, remembering her words, and recognising my meaning with a slight start and a blush. "I don't know that it would interest you."

"It would interest me intensely."

"And besides," she continued, "I am not sure that it was a ghost."

"Never mind; let me judge for myself."

For, indeed, I was less concerned about the ghost than about Mrs. Mantell herself. Most old maids have their hobbies; mine is an affection for romances—romances in real life, I mean. I love them, and I look for them as other people do for bric-a-brac, antique coins or foreign postage stamps, and in the course of the last twenty years, I have amassed a very pretty collection. Already, I divined one in the presence of Mrs. Mantell, not merely from the mingled sweetness and sensitiveness of her expression, but from a few words which, on the day of her arrival, had fallen from our hostess.

"Mr. Mantell is our friend," Mrs. Lester had explained. "I have not yet seen *her*. She was his mother's governess or companion, I forget which, and she had rather a romantic story. She was brought up in a most extravagant style, and then her father died bankrupt, and left her without a penny."

"Do begin, Mrs. Mantell," I pleaded. "The dressing-bell will ring in a few minutes."

She yielded, as I hoped she would; as most human beings do to my flattering, eager interest in them and their experiences.

"I must begin a long way back; three years before the ghost appears. We were then living in Downshire, and we were going to Leachester Races. We generally drove there, but this year we had too large a party for the drag, so it was decided that my cousin Caroline and myself, escorted by my cousin Tom, should go by train. Caroline, I remember, was furious, at the arrangement, which she thought much beneath her dignity and likely to injure the freshness of her toilette. I, on the contrary, thought it would be as Tom suggested, great fun. There was, as we expected, a great crush at the station, and, to make matters worse, we arrived only just before the train started. In fact, it would have started without us, if Tom, to Caroline's indignation, had not thrust us unceremoniously into a third-class carriage.

"Well, I'm not going to lose the first race for your stuck-up notions," said Tom, with cousinly frankness. "It's only for half-an hour, and it won't do you any harm."

I looked round rather nervously, feeling that Caroline's objections were highly discourteous to our fellow passengers. There were seven of them. Four very horsey-looking men loudly discussing the races; a soldier in a scarlet uniform; a young man and maiden in their Sunday array; and a woman with a baby on her lap, on the seat opposite to mine. She glanced up at me as I took my place, showing me as she did so two of the saddest eyes I have ever seen in any human face. They moved me to look at her more attentively. She was a middle-aged woman, poorly but not untidily dressed. I remember she wore a rusty black shawl over her shoulders, and that the baby was wrapped in a coarse grey one. Her face, like her hand which clasped the child, seemed worn to the bone with waste, or care, or suffering; or it might be all three. Her mouth, like her eyes, was sad and uncomplainingly sweet. My spirits, which had been bubbling joyously all day, began to subside. I was glad that a dust-cloak of sombre hue covered from neck to hem the gay dress I wore, and that no one could see the three gold coins jingling loosely in my pocket which my father had given me to spend on sweepstakes. I began to wonder sadly how life felt to those who lived in the shadow instead of the sunshine. Suddenly the baby awoke and began to cry. The mother changed its position and strove to hush it, but the baby only wailed the louder. Everyone in the carriage looked impatiently towards her, and Caroline audibly remarked that babies ought not to be allowed to travel. The poor woman, as she shifted the child from one arm to another, with a weary sigh, looked round upon us for a moment as if mutely entreating our forgiveness for an annoyance she could not prevent.

"Let me take the baby for a little," I said.

I was not experienced in nursing, and had little hope of quieting he child, but I longed to relieve the mother's tired arms and to tone for what seemed to me the ungraciousness of the others.

"Why, Mabel, are you crazy!" exclaimed Caroline. Tom stared t me with mingled wonder and amusement, and even the poor nother looked as if she had not heard aright; but I lent forward and ook the baby gently from her. By a fortunate chance the child left ff crying almost immediately I had it in my arms. It caught sight f a gold ornament I wore, and clutching it in its tiny fists, became bsorbed in examining it for the remainder of the journey. Caroline radually left off sneering, and the others left off staring at me. Only he woman's sad eyes rested on me with a look of admiring awe hich made me feel quite ashamed.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

Then she leant forward and told me her story. It was a very sad ne. She was a soldier's wife and had followed her husband to ndia and back. On the way home she had lost three little children. his one, only eight weeks old, was very weakly. She was going own to stay with her mother to see if the pure country air would do t good.

"You will be glad to get into the country, won't you?"

"Yes," she said wistfully. "But I was sorry to leave my husband."

I had read and heard often enough the most graphic descriptions f poverty and its trials, but I had never felt what it was till that morning when I sat with the poor pale-faced baby in my arms and listened to its mother's voice, low and pathetic, but without a tinge of discontent in its tone. As we reached Leachester I put the baby back in her arms and then slid my hand furtively into my pocket. I did not wish Tom or Caroline to see what I was doing, so I waited till the last moment; then suddenly drew my money out, thrust it into the woman's hand, and jumped on to the platform before she had time to discover what I had given her.

The crowd at this station was greater than ever. Tom had literally to fight a way out for himself and us, and as at one moment we stood, blocked near the exit, I turned to see the train glide from the station. The poor woman with her baby was at the window, watching apparently for me; for, as our eyes met she started and put out her head as if she would have spoken. I could not have heard her if she did; nor did it much matter, for her words would hardly have been as eloquent as her eyes. They seemed, as they met my own, almost to burn with intensity of feeling. There was something solemn in that look. I felt as if the woman were praying for me, and inwardly registering a solemn vow that at some time she would repay me for my help. Then the train swept on, and I saw her no more.

It so happened that I never went to Leachester by train again till three years later; and then alas! under very different circumstances. My father had died leaving me penniless. I had no mother, no relations and, it then appeared, no friends; except, indeed, Mr. and Mrs. Barton our clergyman and his wife. They most kindly insisted on my making my home with them till such time as I could find some means of earning my bread. How difficult that was you can hardly imagine if you have never tried to find paid employment for a woman who has been brought up only to be a lady. I could do several things a little; nothing as well as the people with whom I had to compete.

One day, fairly out of heart, I sat half weeping, alone, by the drawing-room fire, when Eliza, the parlourmaid came in with some tea for me. She looked wistfully at me as she put down the tray, and said: "I beg your pardon, miss, but I heard yesterday that Mrs. Mantell at Leachester wanted a nursery-governess for her two little grandchildren. I don't know as that sort of place would be good enough for you, but if it was, you'd be very happy there, for Mrs. Mantell is such a kind, nice lady. I was housemaid there before I come here. She was such a good lady; anybody couldn't help liking her!"

"I should be too glad to get such a place," I said. "And I will try and go to Leachester to-morrow. How shall I get to the station, I wonder?" For it was six miles off, and Mr. and Mrs. Barton kept no carriage. Eliza timidly suggested that Farmer Edwards would be going into Leachester next day by an afternoon train, and would give me a lift to and from the station, if I would accept it.

"And where does Mrs. Mantell live, Eliza?" was my last question. "I don't know, miss, exactly. She's changed her address since I lived with her, but you can easily find out, you know. She's the doctor's wife. Anyone will tell you where Doctor Mantell lives."

Accordingly next day I went to Leachester. The whole way there I could not refrain from mournfully contrasting my present and my last journey. The one point of resemblance was that on both occasions I travelled in a third-class carriage. Otherwise the difference was complete and depressing between that glowing June morning and this moody November afternoon; between the crowds of pleasure-seekers who then thronged the stations and their dull work-a-day aspect to-day; above all between my then smiling future and my now over-clouded fate. If only the sun would have come out, I thought, I could have felt more hopeful; but not a gleam played on the tall cathedral-spire, or the scattered roofs and gardens of Leachester as we steamed in.

I walked slowly from the station to the more inhabited part of the town and entered the first chemist's shop I saw. "Will you please tell me," I asked the man behind the counter, "where Doctor Mantell lives?"

"Which Doctor Mantell, madam?" was his most unexpected and disconcerting answer.

"Is there more than one Doctor Mantell?"

"Yes, madam; there are two cousins. Doctor George Mantell, who lives in Church Street, and Doctor Leigh Mantell, who lives in St. Anne's Place."

"Do you happen to know which Mrs. Mantell is in want of a nursery governess?"

"They are both looking out for nursery governesses, I think madam."

I was evidently in ill-luck that day. What was I to do? I was especially anxious to find the Mrs. Mantell of whom Eliza had said such pleasant things, but how was I to find her? How could I go to either lady's house, ask if she was the person who had been so kind to Eliza, and then take my leave if she said she was not? Besides, I did not know what Eliza's surname was. Above all, there was not much time wherein to make experiments. In an hour and a half my train would start.

I thanked the man, left the shop and went slowly along, wondering if I must really return without fulfilling my errand, wasting thus a whole afternoon, and the still more precious money which my journey would cost me.

An impulse made me suddenly look up, and I saw standing at the other side of the street a woman, with a baby in her arms, a poor woman in a shabby black shawl. I recognised an instant afterwards that it was the poor woman I had travelled with in the train three years ago. The same sad eyes were looking intently at me now, as if she had something to say to me. I crossed the street to speak to her, but directly I began to move towards her, she turned and began to walk on. I quickened my pace to make up to her, but without success. I went faster and faster till I was almost running, but the faster I went, the faster too did she go; though, strange to say, without running. She seemed to glide very fleetly but very quietly along. At length the astonished looks of the people I was passing reminded me of the remarkable pace I was going at. I slackened my steps, and then, rather provoked, determined to give up the chase. But as I paused the woman paused also, and turning round, beckoned to me with an imploring look in her dark, sad eyes.

It was evident she wanted me to follow her for some unimaginable reason, and did not wish me to walk with her; so, impelled now by curiosity as well as interest, I tacitly submitted to this arrangement. The woman led the way at a moderate pace, and I followed about twenty yards behind. We turned several corners and at last entered what I supposed must, from its outward aspect, be one of the most fashionable streets in the place. This was not the kind of locality into which I expected my humble acquaintance to lead me. "Who

and what can she be?" I asked myself. I saw a sister of charity coming towards me at this moment, and it occurred to me that she might in all probability be able to answer my question.

"Can you tell me, if you please," I said at once, "who that poor woman is—that poor woman with the baby?"

The sister stopped, turned round, and looked in the direction towards which I pointed; then turning towards me with a puzzled expression said:

"What woman? What baby?"

How could she ask such a question? I gazed at her bewildered. There was only one woman, such as I described, to be seen. In fact, no other human being of either sex or any age was then visible on that side of the street.

"Don't you see her?" I repeated incredulously, pointing again towards the woman, who had stopped: "standing at the door of that big house?"

"I see no one," said the sister.

I bid her good-morning, concluding that she was not quite right in her mind; and I fancy from her expression that I left her with the same impression of myself.

My strange guide moved on and I followed her; but just as I reached the big house I had spoken of she disappeared; or rather, as Mrs. Molesworth says in one of her ghost stories, she "was not there." It gave me the most extraordinary feeling I have ever had. I stared and rubbed my eyes for a little, and then I began to wonder if I really had seen a ghost. I turned to give a hopeless glance behind me, and as I did so I saw a name on the brass plate of the door before which I was standing. It was "Dr. George Mantell."

"I hope you rang the bell at once," I exclaimed.

"I did: the coincidence was too remarkable. I determined to see if my ghost had led me there on purpose."

"Well, and was it the right Mrs. Mantell?"

"It was, indeed, the right Mrs. Mantell," she answered fervently. "The best and kindest of women! My mistress first, and then my mother. And you know," she added, glancing rather shyly at me, "I met my husband there."

I have seen a great deal of the darker side of married life, so I was not impressed by this information quite in the way she expected me to be.

"But the woman and the child?" I asked. "Did you ever hear more of them?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Mantell. "Before leaving the train that day, when telling me her story, she had told me her name and her mother's name and address. I was so puzzled by what I had seen that I wrote to inquire about her. Both mother and child were dead: had been dead about three months—the child of convulsions, the mother of decline, hastened by grief and trouble."

"And do you doubt that you saw a ghost?"

"I have my own opinion," she replied; "but I generally keep it to myself. The world is sceptical in such matters. You, I see, have formed yours."

I looked thoughtfully at her, and was just about to ask if she considered that on the whole this singular phantom had been to her a messenger of good, when the door opened, and her husband, who had been out shooting with the other men, entered the room. So I said nothing, but slipped away to the centre-table, where I fingered some books and watched. He went up to her at once, and laid his hand for a moment lightly on her shoulder.

"Well?" he said, looking down at her.

"Well?" she answered, looking up at him.

I could only hear his voice, I could only see her face, and yet I knew in an instant that the ghost had made no mistake.

TRUE LOVE.

In this sweet summer, love of mine,
When all the garden's gay,
And any man may garlands twine
Since flowers for that dear head of thine
Grow thick by every way—
I can but do what others do,
They do no less than I—
I twine and bring my garland too—
Love and despair, and rose and rue—
That thou mayst throw them by

But when cold winds blow by and by
And all the garden's sere,
Not other men, but I—but I—
Shall seek where hidden violets lie,
And pluck them for thee, dear!
Not they, but I, shall serve thee best
When summer's leaves are shed;
I shall bring flowers of love and rest,
And thou shalt wear them in thy breast,
When all *their* flowers are dead.

E. Nesbit.

DREAMS WHICH ARE NOT ALL DREAMS.

IN a previous paper: "The Stuff that Dreams are made of," we gave some account of the physical causes which occasionally excite portentous dreams, and showed that the superstitions which attribute "ill-luck" to certain visions of the night have been founded by experience on a certain amount of scientific basis.

We shall now go on to narrate other instances, in which, however a dream may have been excited, it has produced a definite result, or has been so aptly wrought into the history of the dreamer as to become a powerful factor either in working out circumstances vital to himself or to others associated with him; or else, in tendering forewarning or explanation of such circumstances.

We will begin with a group of dreams which we may call mental dreams; because, from whatever cause, the mind of the sleeper is set a-working in its customary grooves, and a result remains after the dream has passed away.

We will first cite the case of the celebrated Paduan musician Tartini, who died in the year 1770. One night he dreamed that he had an interview with the Archfiend, who made a compact with him, by which—reversing the usual order of such compacts—the devil entered into the service of the musician. To test the musical abilities of his weird attendant, Tartini handed him his violin, and bade him perform a solo. The Evil Spirit obeyed, and performed so admirably that Tartini awoke in immense excitement, the music still ringing in his ears! He endeavoured to repeat it; and though he declared his efforts fell far short of the original performance, yet they resulted in one of the most admired of his pieces; which, in recognition of its source, he called "The Devil's Sonata."

Our English poet, S. T. Coleridge, tells a similar story of himself. When a young man of about twenty-five, he was taking holiday in Somersetshire and had been prescribed an anodyne for some slight indisposition. Afterwards, sitting in his chair, reading a book of travels, he fell asleep. The last words he remembered were, "Here the Kubla Khan commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto: and thus ten miles of fertile ground were enclosed with a wall." From this point the poet's mind seems to have gone on. He slept for about three hours, during which time he himself says that he had the most vivid confidence that he composed from two to three hundred lines. On waking, he seemed to remember the whole and began eagerly to write, but was unfortunately interrupted by a caller. When again at liberty, all had vanished from memory, except what he had already noted down—a fragment of

about fifty lines, with whose misty beauty and strange phantasmagoria we are all more or less familiar.

Dr. Abercrombie relates the following anecdote, which he says is preserved in a family of rank in Scotland, the descendants of the distinguished lawyer who is its hero. This gentleman had been consulted respecting a case of great legal importance and complexity. He had been considering this case with great anxiety and interest for several days, when one night, long after retiring to rest, his wife noticed him rise from his bed, go to his desk and write a long letter, which he then carefully put aside and returned to his couch. She, drowsy herself, instinctively did not interrupt him by any observation. Next morning he told his wife he had had a most interesting dream; "that he had dreamed of delivering a clear and luminous opinion respecting a case which had exceedingly perplexed him, and that he would give anything to recover the train of thought which had passed before him in his dream." She bade him look in his desk, where he found the manuscript he had written; and the views he had therein expressed were proved afterwards to be perfectly correct.

Concerning this dream there is a scientific suggestion—to wit—that the lawyer was actually awake when he arose from the bed and wrote—and that in the morning he mistook the circumstance for a dream! We have all known something of this in our own experience, especially in times of great nervous strain or fatigue, when on awakening for the first time after some great blow or shock, we have asked ourselves for a moment whether it was but a dream, or a terrible reality. One such instance is adduced by the psychological authorities where a gentleman went to bed after an exciting day, and thought next morning he had dreamed of a fire just outside his house. Speaking of his dream, his wife informed him that it was a reality, "that he had got up to the window, looked at the fire, conversed with her concerning it, and that he was at the time fully awake."

There is a well-authenticated story of a gentleman who, in his youth, had made considerable progress in the Greek language, which study had been so interrupted by the circumstances of his later life, that he entirely forgot all he had learned, and could not even read Greek words. Yet, in his dreams, he read Greek works, which he had been accustomed to use at college, and had a most vivid impression of fully understanding them.

It has been said that the idea of the "Divina Commedia" came to Dante in his slumbers. Galen, the Greek physician, one of the fathers of the healing art and a friend of the good Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, declared that he owed a great part of his knowledge to revelations made to him in dreams. Condillac, a distinguished French metaphysician of last century, asserted "that often during the course of his studies he had to leave them unfinished in order to sleep, and that on awaking he had more than once found the work upon which he was engaged brought to a conclusion in his

brain." Jerome Cardan, a celebrated Italian physician of the sixteenth century, believed that he composed books while asleep. Dr. Franklin and Dr. Gregory, respectively believed also that they solved difficult political problems, or obtained important scientific ideas, in dreams. The writer of this article remembers that when a girl, in a somewhat overworked and nervous condition, she was in much anxiety as to the plot of a little story she had been asked to write for a periodical. Utterly tired out with worrying herself, she fell asleep at mid day, and awoke with a clear conception of the plan and moral of the trifling tale she had to tell. The experience has never been repeated.

One high authority on matters of the mind is inclined to think that while "the imagination may, in its flights during sleep, strike upon fancies which are subsequently developed by the reason 'into lucid and valuable ideas,' yet that during sleep the power of bringing the judgment into action is suspended."

He adduces the case of a lady who "dreamed she was the Italian reformer Savonarola, and that she was preaching to a vast assembly in Florence. Among the audience was a lady whom she at once recognised to be her own self! As Savonarola, she was delighted at this discovery, feeling that she was well acquainted with all this person's peculiarities and faults of character, and would therefore be able to give special emphasis to them in the sermon. She did this so very effectively that she saw the image of herself burst into a torrent of tears, and, with the emotion thus excited, the dreamer awoke. It was some time before she was able to disentangle her mixed-up individualities. When she became fully awake, she perceived that the arguments she had employed to bring about the conversion of herself were puerile in the extreme, and were directed against characteristics which formed no part of her mental organisation, and against offences which she had not committed." We must say that this story cannot be regarded as scientifically told, while there are no details of the "puerile" arguments, and no opinion except that of the lady herself as to her peculiarities and shortcomings. It may be that in her dream she enjoyed a share of that rare gift of "seeing ourselves as others see us," which is vouchsafed to the waking hours of very few indeed!

A better illustration is found in Dr. Samuel Johnson's dream of a contest of wit in which he was engaged, and in which, greatly to his dream-mortification, he was worsted by his interlocutor. His subsequent shrewd comment was, "One may mark here the effect of sleep in weakening the power of reflection: for, had not my judgment failed me, I should have seen that the wit of this supposed antagonist, by whose superiority I felt myself depressed, was as much furnished by me as that which I thought I had been uttering in my own character."

But there is another instance, by no means recondite, of the prac-

tical power asserted by preconceived idea upon the sleeping condition.

"It is well-known that many persons having made up their minds to awake at a certain hour, invariably do so." Dr. Hammond, the American psychologist, in stating this fact, adds: "I possess this power in a high degree, and scarcely ever vary a minute from the fixed time. Just as I go to bed, I look at my watch, and impress upon my mind the figures on the dial which represent the hour and minute at which I wish to awake. I give myself no further anxiety on the subject, and never dream of it, but I always wake at the desired moment."

The present writer has a share of the same capacity. She never goes through the ritual of looking at her watch, etc., but simply realises that there is reason to be astir by such a time. Having a habit of "taking time by the forelock," she does so in her sleep, always awaking in *good time* to make all arrangements for the appointed duty. She has no dream on the subject, sleeps as soundly as usual, and awakes suddenly, as if called, and for a moment often wonders what is about to happen. She had one maid-servant who had this power in a very marked degree.

We shall close this paper with two interesting and picturesque instances of the power of preconceived ideas so to work themselves out in dreams as to exercise a real influence on material circumstance.

The first is related by the famous Abercrombie, on the authority of Sir Walter Scott.

A Mr. Rowland, a gentleman of landed property on the Border of Scotland, was prosecuted for arrears of tithe alleged to be due to the representative of a neighbouring noble family. Mr. Rowland felt morally sure that his father, by a recognised process of Scottish law, had bought up these tithes, in which case the prosecution was absolutely groundless. But the most diligent search and inquiry among the public records, his father's papers and legal adviser's, failed to bring to light any evidence of such purchase. Mr. Rowland therefore regarded his cause as lost, and purposed to go to Edinburgh and make the best compromise possible. The night before this contemplated journey, he went to bed with his mind full of the case and his own apparently groundless convictions concerning it. He had a dream of his father, to whom he explained the cause of his distress. The father assured him that his belief was quite correct, that the tithes had been bought up, and that the papers were in the hands of a certain aged and retired lawyer, whom he had never employed save on that one occasion. He advised his son to seek out this gentleman at once, and in case the matter had faded from remembrance to revive his memory by recalling that in the settlement of accounts there had been some difficulty in getting change for a Portuguese gold coin, and they had been obliged to drink out the balance at a tavern.

When Mr. Rowland awoke in the morning, he resolved, before going to Edinburgh, to pay a visit to the old lawyer, whom he found in the village indicated. Ushered into his presence, he, without mentioning the dream, inquired whether he had ever conducted such a business for his deceased father. The old gentleman's recollection was at first very confused, but the story of the Portuguese gold piece revived his remembrance; he looked out the papers and found them, and Mr. Rowland proceeded to Edinburgh and triumphantly defeated his prosecutors.

The other story was related to Dr. Hammond by a personal friend, a lawyer, who was interested in a case wherein the exact age of a cousin of his own was an important feature. It could not be ascertained from any living person. The grandfather of both the gentlemen had taken a great deal of notice of them in their boyhood, and the lawyer often remarked that if he were alive there would be no difficulty about the desired date—that he felt sure he had somewhere seen a record of it in the old gentleman's handwriting, but he could not recollect where. Several months elapsed, and he had given up the search in despair, when he had a dream in which his grandfather came to him, saying:

"You have been trying to find out when James was born; don't you recollect that one afternoon when we were fishing I read you some lines from an Elzevir Horace, and showed you how I had made a family record out of the work by inserting a number of blank leaves at the end? Now, as you know, I devised my books to the Rev. Mr. (Smith), and I was a precious fool for giving him books which he will never read! Get the Horace, and you will discover the exact hour at which James was born."

Next morning the lawyer took the first train to visit the reverend gentleman, who lived in a neighbouring city. In his library he found the Horace, the family record and the entry, exactly as described in the dream. By no effort of his memory, however, could he recollect the incidents of the fishing excursion alluded to.

Scientists consider that both these dreams originate in memories, dormant amid the mental effort and distraction of wakefulness, and asserting themselves in the peace of slumber. In support of this view, it may be observed that in neither case were the facts brought forth beyond the cognizance of the dreamers. It is only likely that Mr. Rowland had had some real basis for his strong conviction regarding the purchase of the tithes. As a heedless boy, he may have overheard the name and address of his father's adviser, and the incident of the Portuguese gold piece. In the other case—that of the lawyer—the personage imaged in the dream makes a distinct appeal to a latent recollection of the dreamer, and, though it failed to revive to his waking consciousness, there is little reason to doubt its existence, since all the other impressions of the dream were proved correct.

JACK'S NIECE.

A CAB drew up in front of the officers' quarters in Overbridge Barracks one cold December evening, and a young lady leant out of the window and spoke to a man standing near.

"Does Captain Kerr live here?" she asked.

"Yes, miss," answered the man; "and I'm his servant. But the Captain's at mess just now."

"Oh, dear! how unfortunate. I suppose I must come in and wait. Please have my boxes taken in and pay the cab."

This being done, Private Jones, looking somewhat surprised, notwithstanding his natural stolidity, ushered the visitor into his master's sitting-room, poked the fire and said:

"Shall I let the Captain know you're here, miss?"

"When does he come back from mess, generally?"

"He'll be back early to-night, miss, for he bid me keep up a good fire, as he was coming to write letters after dinner."

"Then I will wait." And taking off gloves, hat and jacket, the girl drew a comfortable-looking arm-chair near the fire and sat down—presently falling into a gentle slumber; the result, no doubt, of the warmth after the cold air outside.

When Jack Kerr returned from mess, at a comparatively early hour, he was surprised to find the passage he shared with several brother-officers blocked up with trunks, and he wondered "which of the fellows" they could possibly belong to.

"Whose are these, Jones?" he asked, seeing his servant standing near.

"The young lady's, sir." And noticing his master's inquiring look, added: "The young lady in your room, sir."

"The *what*——? What do you mean? Young lady in *my* room? What are you talking about?" And without waiting for any answer, Captain Kerr pushed open his door, and there——

He could scarcely believe his eyes. In front of the fire sat a girl of eighteen or thereabouts, asleep in his arm-chair; two tiny feet in a dainty pair of buttoned boots reposed on the fender, and altogether she had the air of being thoroughly at home. Jack's eyes opened, his jaw fell, and all he could say was: "Good gracious! why——"

At this the sleeper awoke, and catching sight of the new-comer, jumped up and exclaimed:

"Here I am, Uncle Jack! Are you not surprised to see me?" Then, seeing his look of blank astonishment, added: "I'm your niece, Daisy; your sister Mary's daughter."

"My sister Mary's daughter!" repeated Jack, still feeling very much at sea.

"Yes; mamma said she would write to you, but I suppose she has not done so yet. She is always putting off things!"

"I have not heard from my sister for years," said Jack, still looking bewildered.

"No. I call it quite shameful the way mamma has dropped out of sight of all her people! But, you see, papa has been such a rolling stone ever since we went to America——"

"America! Why it was to Australia Mary went."

"Oh, Uncle Jack, we've been in America for years, and I certainly thought mamma had written to you since then. I see I shall have to give you all the family history. Papa found he could not get on well in Australia, and, hearing of an opening in California, we—that is he, mamma, the boys and me—all migrated there. After that we stayed in several places; and now papa has at last found a very good berth in New York."

"And where have you come from now, and how did you find me?"

"Well, you see, I had never been in England; and last year a great friend of mine, Alice Lee, married an Englishman, Mr. Dene, and came over. A short time ago she wrote and begged me to come and pay her a visit, and after a great deal of persuasion, papa and mamma let me do so. Mr. and Mrs. Carter were coming in the *Ocean Queen*, and took charge of me on the voyage. Alice was to meet me at Liverpool. But when we got there, I found a letter from her saying Mr. Dene's father was dying and they had been telegraphed for. So as they could not meet me, I was to go straight to Feltham Park and stay till they returned. I just hated the idea of that, and thought I wouldn't go if I could help it. While thinking what to do, I happened to see in a newspaper that the 50th Regiment was at Overbridge, and, as I knew mamma's brother was in that regiment, I said to myself, 'I'll go and look up Uncle Jack.' At first the Carters rather objected and said I ought to go to Feltham and write to you from there; but I felt it would be such a waste of time and so dreary in a strange place alone, so I came straight here. The Carters had to pass Overbridge on their way to London, and I came with them so far. And here I am, and I hope you're glad to see me, Uncle Jack?"

Poor Jack's puzzled countenance certainly did not express much joy. It *is* rather trying to have a niece, whose existence has hitherto been unknown to one, suddenly come up and plant herself on one's hands in such a summary fashion. Very embarrassing to a bachelor officer living in quarters; and this Jack felt most decidedly.

Daisy watched his face anxiously and then exclaimed: "Don't say you're not pleased to see me, Uncle Jack. Do you know you're ever so much younger and nicer-looking than I expected, and I felt as soon as I saw you that I should have a happy time with you."

Good-natured Jack Kerr was not proof against this piece of flattery from a very pretty girl, whether she might chance to be his niece or no; so he smiled and said: "Well, you see, Daisy, it's rather awkward, because, to tell the truth, I don't know what to do with you. You can't stay here."

"Oh, why not, Uncle Jack? It would be such fun."

"Impossible! Why, I've only two rooms, and this is the bachelor officers' quarters. No lady *could* stay here. So we must think of some place to take you to, at once. It is very late to go to an hotel, and I don't like the idea of your being at one alone—and—and—Well, this is the rummest go!" Jack murmured ruefully to himself, "and I *don't* know what to do." He certainly looked the very picture of embarrassment.

Daisy also looked grave. "I'm afraid I've been very foolish, and am giving you no end of trouble. Perhaps I ought not to have come? Perhaps it was not the right thing to do. But in America we have so much freedom, it never struck me in that light. I think I'd better go off to Feltham by the next train." And Daisy looked inclined to cry.

"Nonsense! Why, my dear child, it's nearly ten o'clock, and you can't travel about by yourself at night. But I do wish you had telegraphed or something, and then I should have been ready with some plan."

"Isn't there anywhere I can go to?" asked Daisy piteously. "I'm so tired, Uncle Jack, and so hungry."

"Hungry! poor child! Well, I can remedy that." And Jack summoned Jones, and despatched that stolid worthy to the mess to order a nice little supper: "cold chicken or something of that sort and a small bottle of champagne, as quickly as possible."

Jack walked up and down the room, looking much disturbed and racking his brains for some plan as to what to do for this unexpected guest; and Daisy sat by the fire, saying nothing, but with her brown eyes full of unshed tears and a sadly pitiful expression. She did feel she had acted foolishly and impulsively, and was full of remorse.

In a very short time Jones returned with a most dainty little supper on a tray, and, setting it down on the table, asked: "Did you find a note from Major Allarton, sir?"

"Allarton!" cried Jack: "that's it! Eat your supper, Daisy, and don't move till I return. Just stay outside the door, Jones, and don't let a soul come in." And, seizing his cap, Jack tore out of the room, down the stairs and across the barrack square to a large house standing by itself near the gate. Hastily ringing the bell, he asked: "Is Mrs. Allarton at home, and will she see me?"

In a few seconds the servant returned, preceded by Major Allarton. "What's the matter, Jack?" said the latter. "Come in; my wife's in the drawing-room." And, without waiting for an answer to his

question, he ushered Jack into a cosy lamp-and-fire-lighted room, where a pleasing-looking lady, no longer very young, rose to greet him, kindly, but with evident surprise at so late a visit.

Hurriedly Jack told his tale and the predicament he was in.

"I don't know what to do, Mrs. Allarton, so I thought I'd come and ask your advice—it's awfully awkward."

"Bring her here. I will have the spare room made ready at once, and then in the morning we can consider what is best to be done."

"Oh, how good of you!" exclaimed the much-relieved Jack. "But I hardly like to take advantage of your kindness in that way—a girl you've never seen, and know nothing about."

"She's your niece, Jack," answered Major Allarton, "and I hope we're old enough friends to do each other a good turn without either feeling put out about it. Mrs. Allarton is right; bring her here at once."

Jack hurried back to his quarters and in a very short time re-appeared at the hospitable Allartons' house with Daisy—the latter feeling very subdued and rather alarmed at the idea of being handed over to a strange lady. But as soon as she saw kind Mrs. Allarton and heard her pleasant, cheery voice making her welcome, all Daisy's fears evaporated and she was once more the bright and smiling girl Jack had found sitting by his fire. Mrs. Allarton looked approvingly at her pretty young guest in her neat dress and jacket of brown cloth trimmed with otter, with cap and muff to match—all very becoming to the fair young face and neat little figure.

"It is late, my dear, and you will be glad to get to bed, I'm sure, after your journey," said Mrs. Allarton, after they had all sat and talked for a little time, and Daisy had told again how she had come to look for "Uncle Jack."

"You'll come and see me in the morning, Uncle Jack?" asked Daisy as she said good-night; and then standing on tip-toe she rather shyly held up her sweet young face and kissed him. Jack Kerr blushed a fine red, and as Daisy and her hostess left the room, Major Allarton laughed and said: "Never mind, Jack, you'll get accustomed to it, in time. She's a very pretty girl. I shouldn't mind having her for a niece myself! Come and have a smoke." And he led the way to his den, where he and Jack were soon established in two easy-chairs with a tumbler a-piece beside them.

"Your niece has gone to bed, Captain Kerr, and is very happy and comfortable," said Mrs. Allarton, putting her head in at the door. "Good-night; come as early as you like in the morning."

Daisy awoke after a good night's rest, feeling as fresh as the traditional rose, and appeared at breakfast looking so like one that both Major and Mrs. Allarton lost their hearts to her. Her pleasant, unaffected manner, too, impressed them most favourably—and they both inwardly pronounced Jack's niece "a success."

"Fancy, this is my first breakfast in England!" she cried. "It

eems like a dream that I should be here—and oh! how good of ou to have me. I felt so frightened and miserable last night when Jncle Jack said he didn't know what to do with me, and now I'm so appy. But—I suppose I must go off to Feltham to-day," she added uefully.

"No, no," answered kind Mrs. Allarton. "Now you are here you nust not hurry away. Until your friends return to Feltham you need ot think of going there."

"You're just in time for the ball to-night," added Major Allarton, vith a smile.

"A ball! Oh, *may* I go—do you think Uncle Jack will take me?"

"If he won't, I will," said Mrs. Allarton, who could not suppress a mile at the girl's eager face. "But have you a dress ready?"

"Yes; such a nice new white frock! But I want things: gloves, nd shoes, a fan, and ——"

"I think Overbridge can supply all you need," laughed Mrs. Allarton. "And here comes your uncle."

Once more Daisy caused Jack some embarrassment by bestowing n him a shy kiss, and her face fell as he said:

"I must make some arrangement to relieve you of this young lady o-day, Mrs. Allarton. I think I had better take her to Feltham 'ark myself——"

"No, no, Captain Kerr; now she is here, let her stay for a little. am delighted to have her. And there is the ball to-night; she vill enjoy that."

"You're too good! But I don't like ——"

"Oh! Uncle Jack, *don't* send me away till after the ball!"

"Well, Daisy, as Mrs. Allarton is so kind ——"

Everything was soon settled. The Allartons had really taken a ancy to Daisy and were genuinely pleased to have her—and the girl vas only too glad to stay with her new friends. Jack went off much elieved; promising to return at twelve o'clock, after his morning luties had been performed, and take Daisy out shopping.

As they walked back to the Allartons' when shopping was over, hey met some people on horseback. "Oh, how I should like a good gallop!" cried Daisy, looking after the riders longingly.

"Do you ride? have you a habit? If so, I'll take you for a turn his afternoon. One of my horses carries a lady."

"Oh! how delightful! There's nothing I like so much as a good ide," answered Daisy, eagerly. "I do think you're the very nicest ıncle I ever heard of!"

Nothing could have been neater than Daisy in her habit, and her ıncle felt a thrill of affectionate pleasure as they set off for a long ide together. "Really, Mary's girl is the jolliest little thing I've ever met, a charming niece, and one a fellow may be proud of," he hought. If there was one thing he was particular about it was how a lady looked on horseback, and Daisy satisfied his fastidious taste

in every respect. She sat well too, and seemed to be perfectly at home in the saddle. "I have ridden ever since I was a baby," she said.

Both Jack and Daisy thoroughly enjoyed their ride; a decorous trot till they had left the town behind them, and then a good stirring gallop over the open breezy downs; and as Jack lifted his niece off her horse at the Allartons' door she said: "I *am* having a good time, Uncle Jack. After all it *was* a happy thought of mine, coming to look you up." And Jack answered heartily: "Very glad you did, Daisy, though I fear I did not give you a very warm welcome at first; but 'all's well that ends well,' and, thanks to the Allartons, this has ended capitally."

If Daisy looked well in her habit, in her ball-dress of soft white tulle she looked quite radiant, and Mrs. Allarton was amused to see how all his brother-officers came and begged to be introduced to "Jack's niece." The story of her arrival had not leaked out, and Jack had only said his niece was "staying with the Allartons for the ball;" and as Captain Kerr and the Allartons were well-known to be great friends, this had occasioned no surprise.

"Hullo! Carr, back in time for the ball after all," said Jack to a tall, dark man, in the uniform of the 50th. "I thought you weren't coming till next week."

"Yes, I am back sooner than I expected, and feel rather out of it, knowing so few people. By Jove! What a pretty girl in white, talking to Mrs. Allarton; who is she?"

"That's my niece. Come and be introduced."

"She's very like someone I know—and I can't think who it is," said Captain Carr, looking puzzled. "What is her name?"

"Gaskell, Daisy Gaskell; her mother is my sister." And Jack, having by this time reached the end of the room where Mrs. Allarton and Daisy were standing, said to the latter:

"Daisy, I want to introduce Captain Carr of our regiment to you."

"Another Captain Carr," said Daisy, as she smiled and bowed. "Fancy two in the same regiment."

"Yes, but we don't spell it the same way," said the new-comer; "'KERR' and 'CARR.'"

"Oh, I see; but still it must be confusing sometimes."

"Can you give me a dance?" asked Captain Carr.

"Well—later on perhaps—but you see how full my card is," and she smilingly held up a card covered nearly to the end with initials and hieroglyphics.

"May I have this valse, No. 19, Miss Gaskell?"

Daisy looked up, surprised. "You may have the valse, if you're asking me, Captain Carr, but my name is not Gaskell."

"Not Gaskell? Why, I thought your uncle ——"

"No, no," she said, shaking her head and smiling. "I'm sure Uncle Jack never said that was my name ——"

"Then may I ask what it is?"

"Douglas, Daisy Douglas," she answered, as she moved away with a partner who had come to claim her.

"Douglas!" repeated Captain Carr, with a look of intense surprise. 'How very odd!" And catching sight of Jack Kerr at that moment, he went up to him and said:

"Look here, Kerr, why did you say your niece's name was Gaskell?"

"Because it is," replied Jack. "Who says it isn't?"

"She does."

"Good gracious! What can she mean? Why, my sister Mary married Archie Gaskell and went off with him to Australia, and last night that little girl turned up here and said she was my sister Mary's daughter. And now—what can she mean? It's some joke, Carr, depend upon it."

"I don't know what to think; but I don't believe it is a joke. She says her name is Douglas."

"Nonsense! If she's my sister Mary Gaskell's daughter, how *can* her name be Douglas?"

"Jack," said Captain Carr, "I believe there's some mistake. I have a sister Mary who is in America, and is Mrs. Douglas—and it's my belief this is *my* niece, not yours. The moment I saw her I was reminded of someone I knew, and now I've got the clue. She's the image of my sister Mary as I can remember her first when she married Douglas. They went to Australia directly after, and then to California, and I've heard from her at long intervals from America since then. She has one girl and two boys; and, by-the-way, I believe I'm god-father to one of the latter."

"Carr! Can it be possible? But I do believe you must be right! My sister married when I was quite a boy, and went to Australia, and I never heard she had gone to America till my niece—or—your niece—confound it! I'm getting awfully mixed—told me so last night; and your story tallies exactly with hers. She asked me if I didn't think her like mamma, and I must say nothing could be more *un*like my recollection of my sister. But this is a go! Who is to tell her? It's very awkward, Carr ——"

"Suppose we say nothing about it to-night, and get Mrs. Allarton to tell her to-morrow?"

"Yes, yes," cried Jack, much relieved. "But it *is* awkward! By the way, your name isn't Jack?"

"No, it isn't; but as Adolphus, the hideous name given me by my god-parents, was thought too long and ugly for home use, my people always called me 'Jack,' and I suppose Mary still continues to think of and call me by it. Presently I am to dance with your—no—*my* niece, and I will try to find out all I can from her, so as to be sure there is no mistake *this* time."

Jack Kerr was decidedly uncomfortable at the turn things had

taken. In even so short an acquaintance he had grown fond of the bright little girl who came so unexpectedly to claim him as a relation, and he feared the impending revelation would be anything but pleasant to her, and that it would cause much awkwardness. However, if kind Mrs. Allarton would undertake to tell Daisy of her mistake, it would relieve him of a very distasteful task.

Valse No. 19 arrived at last, and Captain Carr claimed his promised partner.

"Are you quite sure of my name now?" she asked with a smile.

"Yes, Miss Douglas. I don't think I shall make any more mistakes. Do you know you are very like a Mrs. Douglas I once knew. What is your father's name?"

"Charles—and my eldest brother is called after him. Number two is Jack, after my uncle—who is mother's only brother. But though he is always called Jack, and my brother had the same name given him, funnily enough, I believe my uncle's real name is Adolphus. But that is *too* dreadful—how would *you* like to have such a name?" and Daisy looked up at him smilingly.

"Not a pretty name, certainly," he answered; and added: "You have never seen your uncle before, I suppose?"

"No; I only arrived from America yesterday, and really I'm quite ashamed to tell you how I came and took Uncle Jack by storm. It was rather awkward, you see, because he did not know where to take me." And then she proceeded to give him an account of her adventures from the beginning; adding: "I can't say how kind dear Mrs. Allarton is. She has made me feel quite at home, and as if I had known her all my life. And Uncle Jack has been so good, and so generous! He gave me this lovely fan, my gloves, my bouquet, and oh, such a lovely necklet!"

Captain Carr smiled rather grimly. He could not but feel that these presents of Jack's would by-and-bye add terribly to poor Daisy's discomfort. From what she had told him he could not retain the vestige of a doubt that she was his niece instead of Jack's, and the question arose what was *he* to do with her on the morrow when all was disclosed.

"There's nothing for it but Aunt Adelaide," he thought—this venerable lady being the only available female relation to whom he could take Daisy till her friends at Feltham were ready to receive her. "I fear the poor little girl won't have a very merry time with her, but it would be very embarrassing for her here when she learns her mistake," he reflected.

Meanwhile Daisy, quite unconscious of the bomb-shell that was to explode upon her small head on the morrow, danced gaily, thoroughly enjoying what was really a very good ball. "Jack's niece" was very much admired, and he felt more and more uncomfortable as several of his brother-officers congratulated him on his relationship to so charming a young lady. At the beginning of the evening they had

anced together once or twice, but after his talk with Captain Carr, poor Jack had not ventured near Daisy. "I suppose I must call er Miss Douglas now," he thought. "Well, she's a dear little soul, nd Carr is to be envied." Each time Daisy passed him she had a ight little nod and word for "Uncle Jack," till at last poor Jack, eling sadly as if *he* were an impostor, could stand it no longer, but ter a few words to Mrs. Allarton, saying he would like to see her one in the morning, he slipped away to his own rooms.

"What can Captain Kerr have to say to me? I hope he does not ally want to take Daisy off to Feltham," said Mrs. Allarton to her sband.

"I don't suppose it's anything very dreadful," he answered. "What pretty girl she is, and dances like a fairy."

When, at a very early morning hour, Daisy bade "Good-night," rather, "Good-morning," to Mrs. Allarton, she added: "I never, ever enjoyed myself so much; but what became of Uncle Jack? I ould not find him latterly, and did not see him dancing, and I anted so much to say good-night, and to thank him for such a vely day.—And oh! he does dance well—I would rather dance ith him than with anyone."

Next morning Mrs. Allarton was surprised to see Jack and aptain Carr appearing together; the more so as the former had ked to see her alone, and the latter she only knew slightly, as he ad been a good deal away from his regiment, on staff employment. ut she liked what she did know of him, and greeted them both ndly, waiting to hear what they had to say.

"Mrs. Allarton," began Jack, "I asked to see you this morning, something rather awkward has transpired. I had better tell ou the story from the beginning. You know I have one sister, ary ——"

"Daisy's mother—yes—I know," murmured Mrs. Allarton.

Jack coloured and continued. "My sister is much older than I n, and married, when I was quite a boy, Archie Gaskell. They ent to Australia, and for some time I heard occasionally from ary, but gradually our correspondence ceased, and, having no her near relations, I have quite lost sight of her for years. I knew ary had children, but was immensely surprised, as you know, when y—Daisy—appeared the other night, and told me she was my niece, e daughter of my sister Mary. It never occurred to me it could e a mistake ——"

"Now it is my turn to speak," said Captain Carr. "I, too, have sister Mary, and she married a mining engineer, Charles Douglas, nd went first to Australia, then to America. I hear from her now nd then, and, in one of her last letters, she said something about the ossibility of her little girl coming to England to visit friends. When saw your young guest at the ball last night, her likeness to someone knew struck me at once. I asked Kerr who she was, and he told

me his niece, Miss Gaskell. Afterwards, when introduced to her, I addressed her by that name. She looked surprised, said there was some mistake, for her name was 'Douglas.' And the long and short of it is, we find she is *my* niece, not Jack's, and the similarity of names has led to the mistake."

"Well, this is too amusing!" exclaimed Mrs. Allarton, when she had heard all they both had to say. "But, after all, there is nothing very terrible in the mistake, only I fear it may make Daisy feel rather awkward at first. You had both better stay away till I tell her about it. Your niece is quite safe with me, Captain Carr, and I like her so much for her own sake that this makes no difference about her visit here. I shall be glad to have her as long as she can stay."

Some time later, Daisy having breakfasted and talked the ball over well with her hostess, the latter said:

"Now, my dear, prepare for a great surprise," and then proceeded to inform her of the mistake she had made.

Poor Daisy! As the truth dawned upon her, the colour first rushed in a perfect flood to her cheeks, and then faded away as suddenly; and she exclaimed in a voice of misery:

"Oh, dear, Mrs. Allarton, what *have* I done? How could I make such a dreadful mistake? *Not* my Uncle Jack—and—I've—I've—*kissed* him—oh!—and taken his presents—and—oh! dear, I shall die of shame. What must he think of me?" And, bursting into a flood of tears, she buried her burning cheeks in the sofa cushions, while a perfect storm of sobs shook her slight frame.

Mrs. Allarton tried in vain to soothe the poor girl.

"I can never, never see him again," she sobbed. "Oh! let me go away at once, please, dear Mrs. Allarton. I don't want to see either of them again. Oh! what would mamma say?"

Finally, Mrs. Allarton sent a note to Captain Carr, asking him to call. When he came, she told him how terribly upset Daisy was.

"I have written to my aunt, Mrs. Barton," he said, "asking her to receive Daisy, her great-niece, for a few days, and begged her to telegraph a reply. As soon as I hear from her, if her answer is in the affirmative, which I have no doubt it will be, I will take Daisy to her at Chester, till she can go to her friends, the Denes. Will you please tell her this, and I will let you know as soon as my aunt's answer comes?"

Thus it was settled. Mrs. Allarton felt there was no use pressing Daisy to prolong her visit under the circumstances; and next morning, a favourable answer to Captain Carr's letter to Mrs. Barton having been received, she left Overbridge with her real uncle.

"Good-bye, my dear, and I hope by-and-bye we shall see you again. Don't be too unhappy about a very natural and innocent mistake. You will laugh about it some day, I've no doubt," and Mrs. Allarton smiled as she kissed her departing guest.

"Oh, Mrs. Allarton, I can never see *him* again. He must think me

ch a terribly bold, forward girl. Good-bye; good-bye, and thank ou a thousand times." And Daisy gave a very watery smile of fare-ell to her kind and hospitable friend.

She felt shy and uncomfortable with the real uncle. Somehow he as much more formidable than Captain Kerr. He was older and aver, and the thought of her awkward mistake had quite subdued oor Daisy; but her uncle was very kind, and made her as comfort-le as he could on the journey, though he talked little. As they ared Chester he said:

"Daisy, I have told Aunt Adelaide nothing except that you have me over from America to visit some friends, that owing to illness the family they are unable to receive you for a few days, and at you've stayed with friends of mine till I knew she could have u. So you need say nothing about this misunderstanding."

"Thank you, uncle." And then, with a half-sob, she added: May I call you Uncle Adolphus, please?"

"I thought you objected to the name," he said, laughing. "But u can call me what you like. I suppose you've heard of your eat-aunt Adelaide?"

"Yes; mamma has talked of her, and said she was very old and ther cross, but that she supposed I should have to go and see her efore I left England."

In due time Captain Carr and Daisy arrived at Mrs. Barton's ode—and received a rather frosty welcome. The old lady did not ke girls, she said, but her nephew was a favourite, and as Daisy me with him, Aunt Adelaide was less chilling than she might other-ise have been.

"Fancy Mary letting you come all the way from America by your-lf," she said. "There's no knowing what mischief you might have t into on the way."

Daisy blushed crimson, and could barely falter that Mr. and Mrs. arter, American friends, had brought her over.

Having seen his niece settled at Mrs. Barton's, Captain Carr re-rned to Overbridge, feeling it first incumbent on him to say "a ord in season." "Let this be a lesson to you, Daisy, not to act on npulse. It *might* have been no end awkward, but Jack Kerr is a orough good sort, and will never say a word about your mistake to nyone. Good-bye; write and tell me when you hear from the enes."

Certainly life at Aunt Adelaide's was not exciting. Daisy spent a reary fortnight with her, and then came a letter from her friend lice, saying that Mr. Dene's father had, after all, recovered from his angerous illness, and was well enough for them to leave him, and at she anxiously expected Daisy at Feltham Park. So, bidding rs. Barton farewell, Daisy left Chester without any great regret. he had written to her mother a full account of her unhappy mistake, ut felt it was unnecessary to tell anyone else.

Several weeks passed very pleasantly at Feltham. Alice Dene and Daisy had many things to talk of, old jokes to laugh over, old friends to discuss. Once or twice Daisy felt half tempted to tell her friend of her dreadful mistake at Overbridge, but her courage always failed. The memory of it still made her feel miserable, and even in the privacy of her own room brought hot blushes to her cheeks. Mrs. Dene was delighted to have an opportunity of showing her new home to an old friend, and they rode and drove about together, and, as the neighbourhood was a sociable one, there were luncheon and dinner-parties to vary the monotony. There was also the County Ball to look forward to, when all the houses round would be filled for the occasion. Mrs. Dene had collected a large and merry party of "young men and maidens," and felt that her pretty friend would certainly be one of the belles of the ball.

When the night of the ball arrived, Daisy could not bring herself to wear again the white dress she had worn at Overbridge—it would be too painful, she felt; so she chose a very pale pink, which was almost equally becoming. In a very short time after entering the ball room her card was nearly filled; the men of the house-party all begged for dances, and Daisy was feeling most bright and happy, when suddenly she saw a sight that covered her face with blushes, and almost brought tears to her eyes.

It was only a tall, good-looking, soldierly young man, but her confusion was great as she recognised "Uncle Jack"—no—"Captain Kerr." She hurriedly looked for Mrs. Dene to beg to be allowed to go home—a sudden "headache," any plea would do, by which she might effect her escape; but nowhere could she see Alice. She felt miserable, wretched, wished the floor would open and swallow her. "I hope he won't see me," she thought—but at that moment Jack Kerr turned and saw her. A bright smile of recognition lighted up his pleasant face, and, before she could escape, Captain Kerr stood in front of her.

"May I have a dance?" he asked, and without waiting for an answer, took her card and wrote in the first vacant space one word: "Jack"—then bowed and moved on.

Daisy felt that now escape was impossible. She danced each dance, but as the one for which "Jack" had written his name approached, she became more and more silent and nervous, till her partners wondered why Miss Douglas was so absent and pre-occupied.

When Captain Kerr's dance began, he silently offered her his arm. They joined at once the throng of valsers, and Daisy could not help enjoying the real pleasure of a good valse to charming music with a partner whose step suited hers perfectly. At the close of the dance Jack led her into a conservatory.

"Now let us have a talk," he said. First he asked her to tell him all she had been doing since they met, then gave her news of the Allartons, etc. Jack talked so naturally and calmly, that Daisy

shyness soon melted, and she found herself chattering away to him as happily as if the miserable mistake which had caused her such unhappiness had never occurred. As he bade her good-night, later on, he said:

"I am going to stay for some time in this neighbourhood. Will you introduce me to Mrs. Dene; I want to ask her permission to call."

"Pray do come," Mrs. Dene answered to his request. The handsome, pleasant-mannered young man impressed her favourably at once.

Jack Kerr spent a fortnight in the neighbourhood of Feltham, and scarcely a day passed that he did not appear there on some excuse or other. Frank Dene and he found many tastes in common, and several mutual acquaintances, and he was always welcome. Daisy grew, unconsciously, to look eagerly for his coming, and to feel the day dull indeed when he did not appear.

"This is my last day," he said, as they walked together in the garden. Daisy was out gathering snowdrops when he arrived, and he had asked Mrs. Dene if he might go and find her. "Do you know why I came, Daisy?"—Then seeing her downcast blushing face he continued: "At first I felt very sorry to find out our mistake, but I soon became glad to think you were really not my niece. Do you know why, Daisy?"

She shook her head. "Please don't talk of that dreadful mistake ——"

"I was glad, dear, because I felt I wanted you to be something nearer and dearer than a niece. Do you think, Daisy, you can care for me enough to be my little wife?"

Another half-hour in the garden; then Jack said:

"Good-bye, Daisy, I must go back to Overbridge. Shall I give your love to Mrs. Allarton?"

"Yes, please."

"And I can tell her I'm going to marry "Jack's niece!"

"ABSENT FRIENDS!"

Cher Jules, across the "silver streak,"
Keeping your "Jour de l'an" to-day;
Mes vœux to thee—I kiss thy cheek—
"Shek 'ands!" Champagne! "A ta santé!"
We've drowned old hates in many loves
Parisian, dainty, mocking, gay!
Bonbons, and operas-bouffes and gloves—
Jules, au revoir! we'll meet in May!

Du lieber Hans! I pledge thee here,
Thou, and thy thrice belovèd Rhine!
Whose vineyards fed, one happy year,
This thin-necked flask of amber wine—
All blessings on its pleasant strand,
All blessings on its laden vine—
Auf wiedersehn, lieb' Vaterland!
Long be such draughts, Hans, mine and thine!

Amico mio! o'er the Alps
I wave a hand, a kiss I blow!
We arch our eyebrows to our scalps,
Respect, esteem, delight to show!
Your red Chianti brims my glass
With more good wishes than I know
How to express; so, by the Mass,
A Rivederci, Giulio!

To lands beyond Atlantic seas
My fancy wings a further flight—
I'll dance the "German," an' you please,
With Cousin Sam on New Year's night!
We're kith and kin—Your best of health!
Rum Punch? No, really?—Wal' you might!
Why, cert'nly—Good luck, great wealth,
All happiness! in honour bright.

Once more I shake you by the hand
Whate'er your country, race, degree—
Good fellows all of every land—
All absent friends, all ships at sea,
God bless you! As the years increase
May all fair things your guerdon be;
Good-will of men, Heaven's gift of peace—
And sometimes, friends, remember me!

G. B. STUART.

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

CHAPTER VII.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

WHILE Mark Brown was terrifying Janet by discharging the old horse-pistol at his worthless head, Vera was riding slowly up the steep lane in which the above little drama was being enacted. She was lost in thought, for in her pocket was a letter from Captain Raleigh to her father, which she had just fetched from the post-office. Judging from her face, which was beaming with joy, her thoughts were happy ones, and perhaps little short of the sudden report of the pistol which startled her mare would have brought her down to mundane considerations.

A minute after the report of the pistol, Vera reached the spot from which it was fired, and seeing in the dusk a man lying in the hedge with a pistol at his feet, and Janet helpless and ready to faint leaning against a wall, she dismounted, and holding her mare, which was fidgety, with one hand, she put her other arm round Janet, who now began to sob hysterically.

"Janet! What is it? Are you hurt? Who is this man?" said Vera. For Mark's face was hidden, a pair of legs sticking up in the air being the most striking parts of his visible person.

"It is Mark, Miss Vera; he has killed himself, and I suppose it is all my fault. Oh! what shall I do? What shall I do?" and Janet wrung her hands in despair.

Two thoughts flashed through Vera's mind: the first that it was unlike Mark Brown to hurt himself deliberately in any way, the second that the legs of dead people did not usually stick up in the air in that fashion: and arguing from these two premises, she came to the conclusion that Mark was shamming.

"Get up this moment, Mark, or you'll get kicked; I can't hold Firefly as well as Janet" she said, sharply.

Her words had a magical effect on the supposed corpse. Mark sprang up in an instant, shook himself, and took Vera's mare, with an awkward attempt at a laugh, as he said in what was meant for an apologetic tone :

"I was only having a piece of fun, Miss Vera."

"Fun indeed ! I am ashamed of you, Mark. It was most cowardly conduct, and you have frightened poor Janet terribly. Take Firefly home at once. I shall speak to your master about this," said Vera, angrily.

Mark slunk off like a whipped hound, and Vera, picking up the skirt of her habit, pulled Janet's arm through her own, and led her slowly up the hill.

"I'll see you home, Janet, and stay with you till Reuben comes back. Mark shan't be allowed to worry you in this way if I can help it ; it is downright persecution. But you must tell me all about it, and we will see what can be done," concluded Vera, anger against Mark as well as sympathy with Janet making her forget her own happy hopes for the time.

How Janet wished she could tell Vera all about it, but this was impossible. All that concerned Mark Brown and his persecution of her she could and did tell her when they got into the cottage ; but her real sorrow, her secret marriage, this Janet dare not breathe. Even if Rex had given her leave to do so, she would hardly have ventured to break to Vera that she was her brother's wife. Such news could only be most unwelcome to Vera. Indeed she might probably refuse to have anything to say to her, for though Vera was passionately attached to Rex, and was described among all her father's parishioners as "a very nice young lady, with no pride," Janet felt there was probably a limit to Vera's sisterly devotion, and to her humility ; and she doubted whether either could stand such a shock as the news that her brother had secretly married the blacksmith's daughter.

But Rex had enjoined strict secrecy, and Janet was prepared to suffer martyrdom if necessary rather than disobey his injunctions. All she hoped and prayed was, that he would announce his marriage before she became a mother. Poor Janet ! If she could have seen into the future, even her brave spirit—and she was brave where Rex's interest was concerned—would have quailed before the fiery trial she was destined to pass through.

Reuben returned a few minutes after the two girls. The blacksmith's great frame seemed almost to fill the little room when he entered it, and at Vera's request sat down in front of the newly-kindled fire now blazing brightly, and throwing Vera's lovely girlish figure, set off by her well-fitting habit, into high relief against the white-washed wall behind her. She had taken off her hat and gloves and was sitting upright on Reuben's arm-chair, screening her beautiful face with two little white hands from the fire. Her golden

hair was somewhat disordered by her ride, and her great dark eyes sparkled with the excitement of the scene they had just witnessed, and Reuben thought he had never seen her look so pretty.

Janet's florid style of beauty with her fine figure, even though she was paler than usual, looked commonplace in the presence of Vera, who appeared like the denizen of another world. For grief and love had both set their mark on the girl's face, and Reuben dimly felt her beauty was of a superior order to Janet's.

Janet's was the beauty of form and colour only, realistic, of the Rubens type; Vera's was more. Added to delicacy of form and colour was the beauty of a soul strong to love and to suffer, of a pure spirit, idealistic, Raffaellesque. There are men in the world who would hardly have looked at Vera when Janet was near; there are others who certainly would not have looked at Janet in Vera's presence, and perhaps the last are the fewer. But Reuben, though only a blacksmith, showed his good taste and his real worth when he felt the power of Vera's beauty.

Reuben grew very grave when he heard of Mark's behaviour, which was certainly most unbecoming to so recent a convert. Vera was spokeswoman, and she pleaded Janet's cause so eloquently that the blacksmith himself suggested she should go on a visit to her aunt Norah for a few months, and professed his ability to manage without her, though he owned it would be dull work during the winter. It was finally arranged that Janet should go to Mrs. Canter in a week or ten days: and that Mark might not follow her, it should be given out she was gone to service, her real destination being kept a secret from everyone but Vera and Reuben.

On her return home, Vera went straight to her father, to give him Captain Raleigh's letter and to tell him of Mark's conduct. At first Mr. Ryot Tempest was inclined to take Mark's part, and though he allowed that playing with fire-arms was a foolish practice, he blamed Janet for not marrying his factotum, who he maintained would make a very good husband.

But when he learnt that his paragon had been guilty of such apostacy as joining the Baptists, he changed his tune, and ringing the bell, ordered Mark into his august presence, determined to give him notice. Well for him; better for Mark, and best for Vera had he done so. But Mark played the penitent so well, and confessed that though he had submitted to being dipped in a slimy pond he was at heart a churchman, that in the end the Rector relented and Mark remained at the Rectory.

Mark's anger with Vera for having reported his conduct to her father was none the less deep for being concealed under a civil manner; and when a fortnight later he heard Janet was gone out to service no one knew where, he attributed this to Vera's influence, and resolved to be revenged on her sooner or later. To her he attributed all his ill-luck, and there grew up in his heart, by the side of his love

for Janet, an almost insane hatred of his fair young mistress, who he knew despised and disliked him.

Vera was very sincere, consequently she showed her likes and dislikes very strongly, but she was quite unconscious of the hatred she had inspired in Mark's bosom, though had she known it, it would never have troubled her, for it would not have occurred to her that her father's groom could exercise any influence over her life. Yet destiny had decreed that influence should be a very remarkable one.

Vera's thoughts, however, were occupied by a far more interesting subject than Mark Brown, for Mr. Ryot Tempest's letter was to say Captain Raleigh hoped to be in the neighbourhood very shortly, and would do himself the pleasure of renewing their acquaintance.

He was true to his word, and the acquaintance very quickly ripened into friendship, for Captain Raleigh soon let it be known his object in coming to that part of the world was to be near Vera. He was staying at the only decent hotel in the nearest town, but most of his time was spent at the Rectory, or rather with Vera, with whom he rode or walked every day. At first Mr. Ryot Tempest accompanied them, but his equestrian powers were not great and their pace did not suit him; so reflecting that Captain Raleigh was one of *the* Raleighs, and consequently a cousin of the Ryots, he allowed Vera to accompany him without a "chaperon."

One Saturday afternoon about ten days after Captain Raleigh's arrival, he and Vera started off for a walk, while Mr. Ryot Tempest paid his usual weekly visit to Mrs. Jamieson.

It was a lovely autumn day, the trees which clothed the hillsides had lost most of their leaves; what remained were of gorgeous tints of red and yellow and gold and russet browns, varied frequently by the blue-greens of the Scotch firs, while the ground beneath them was thickly strewn with fallen leaves gleaming golden in the sunshine. A purple haze over the distant hills contrasted finely with all these golden reds, but though a great admirer of Nature in all her moods, Captain Raleigh was too much occupied with his own thoughts and with looking at Vera's graceful figure, clad in its deep mourning, to pay any heed to the scenery till she called his attention to it. He was in a languid mood to-day, for the first time since his arrival, so Vera determined to take it out of him by suggesting they should mount the opposite hill.

"We will go up behind the convent; that will be new to you."

"Not quite, I have been as far as the convent before," said Captain Raleigh, quietly.

Vera wondered rather at this, and it certainly never occurred to her that he had been to the chapel adjoining it to hear mass that very morning: for it was All Saints' Day.

"But not beyond? We will go up to the top, then, through that wood; there is a very pretty view of our church a little above the

convent; it had need look picturesque outside, for the interior is ugly enough, as you will see to-morrow."

"I am afraid I shan't be able to do that," said Captain Raleigh, eyeing Vera sharply.

"Why not?" said Vera.

"Because I am a Catholic; didn't you know it?"

"A Catholic? Oh, dear, I am sorry," said Vera, naïvely; but the next moment she could have bitten her tongue out for saying it.

"Why are you sorry? Surely as your dear mother was a good Catholic, you can't have any prejudice against us?"

"Oh, no, it isn't that; besides, I was baptised a Catholic. Father Ambrose baptised me when I was a week old, so perhaps I shall be one myself some day, when I know more about it."

"Then tell me why you are so sorry that I am one."

Vera blushed crimson, and poked vigorously with her umbrella among the fir-needles with which the path was strewn. At last she said in a hesitating tone:

"Well, you see my father is very bigoted, and I am afraid when he hears it he won't let us have any more walks or rides together."

"And shall you mind that?" eagerly demanded Captain Raleigh.

"Yes," said Vera frankly. "I was very dull till you came, and I have enjoyed this week very much."

"So have I; so much that I wish it could last for ever. I wish we could walk and ride through life together; I have wished it ever since I sat opposite you at dinner at Avranches. Shall we do it, Vera?"

Vera trembled, for this was the first time he had called her by her christian name; but there was an element of coquetry in her nature, and she could not resist teasing him just a little.

"Well," she said demurely, "I like walking very much, and I like riding very much, but I don't think I should care to spend my whole life riding and walking. It might pall after awhile. Besides, it would be so very tiring you know."

Captain Raleigh, however, was not a man to stand teasing; he knew Vera cared for him, he knew too those lines of Heine:

> Der zum ersten male liebt
> Sei's auch glücklos ist ein Gott
> Aber wer zum zweiten male
> Glücklos liebt der ist ein Narr."

He had loved once unhappily; he had no intention of loving unluckily a second time, and so incurring the poet's reproach of being a fool.

"You know what I mean, Vera; this is no time for trifling," he said sternly; and Vera liked him better than ever.

"I am in earnest," he went on. "I meant to have spoken to your

father first, but I can't wait any longer. Vera, I love you; will you be my wife."

There was no languor about him now, as he seized one of Vera's hands, and bent down towards her till his face was close to hers, looking as if his very life hung on her answer.

"Papa will never consent," said Vera at last.

"And what will you do?" said Raleigh, drawing her close.

"I don't know," whispered Vera.

The next thing of any interest to other people which occurred was, Vera's hat came off. How it happened has never transpired; but after its loss was discovered, which was not immediately, and the hat had been re-adjusted by Captain Raleigh, which was a somewhat lengthy proceeding, the conversation assumed a less fragmentary nature than it had partaken during this little interlude.

"You love me then, Vera?"

"I am not quite sure."

"Not sure; what do you mean? For heaven's sake don't play with me, Vera!"

"Well, you see, I adored my mother; I am devoted to Rex; I am very fond of my old nurse, Norah Canter; my feeling for my father is what I take to be affection; but my feeling for you is different from all these, so I suppose it must be love. If it is, I have never loved anyone before, and I never mean to love anyone again."

"Why not?" interrupted Raleigh.

"Because it is not all plums. But on the whole I am inclined to think it is love."

Captain Raleigh inclined to the same opinion. At any rate he seemed perfectly satisfied with Vera's naïve diagnosis of her feelings, and did not consider the fact of her being by her own confession a mere tyro in the art of love any drawback to his happiness.

Slowly they climbed to the top of the hill, sublimely regardless of the artistic effects the sun wrought in the wood. In vain for them it glinted through the trees, lighting up the silvery trunks of the beeches, and kindling the leaves and mast which strewed the ground into burning red and gold; in vain it cast long purple shadows over the distant blue hills; in vain lit up a maple-tree here and there, till its pale golden leaves seemed luminous. Nature might be fair, but love was fairer, and some presentiment of coming trouble made them take their fill of present joy. But when they came out of the wood into a green pasture on the top of the hill, Vera could not help exclaiming:

"Look at the grass, what a lovely colour it is; and the path looks like a rainbow."

The long grass was of that exquisite bluey-green one sometimes sees in autumn when the sun is low, while the rich madder-brown path across the field, bordered with faded grasses, was glorified by the sunlight into the faint semblance of a prism.

"It does; I hope it isn't typical of our path through life," said Raleigh.

"I hope it is, to some extent. We shall have a little rain no doubt, but if the sun be shining at the same time, I shall not mind," said Vera.

"I hope our happiness won't fade like a rainbow," replied Raleigh; "but what you have told me of your father makes me fear there is trouble in store for us."

"Not if we are true to each other," said Vera gently.

"And you will be true, my Vera, won't you?"

"Yes, Captain Raleigh."

"How dare you, Vera! Never let me hear you call me Captain Raleigh again. Oh! if we were only in that wood ——"

"What would you do?"

"Call me Captain Raleigh again and I'll show you."

"What am I to call you, then? I don't know your christian name," said Vera with assumed meekness.

"Call me Jack, my darling."

"Jack, my darling!" said Vera archly; and although they were not in the wood, still the field was empty, and she had her reward.

And then they wandered on, lost in each other, till suddenly a little man, jumping about like an indiarubber ball on a trotting pony in the valley beneath them, attracted Vera's attention.

"There goes my father. He has been to Ashchurch. The only person we know there is Mrs. Jamieson. I wonder what he has been to see her for?" said Vera.

"Jamieson—Jamieson? Who is Mrs. Jamieson?"

"She is a rich widow, with some wonderful diamonds. Her husband was double her age, and he is just dead. That is all I know about her, except I don't like her."

"I know more than that: I knew her well before her marriage."

"And do you like her?" asked Vera eagerly.

"I did, Vera. I fancied I loved her once, in my salad days. I am wiser now," said Raleigh penitently.

"I hate her; and I can't think what papa has been to see her for. We called on her not so very long ago."

"If he has mentioned me, she will prejudice him against me. But never mind, Vera, we must hope for the best; and if the worst comes to the worst, we can but wait till you are of age, and can please yourself."

"That won't be for more than a year. But I should not like to marry against my father's wishes. Tell me, Jack: were you very fond of Mrs. Jamieson?" And Vera slipped her hand through Captain Raleigh's arm and looked up into his face.

"I was, but I was an utter fool for my pains! Forgive me that folly, my little Vera."

"You are quite sure you like me better than you liked her, Jack?"

"Better, Vera! I love you better than my life! My love for her was hardly worthy the name of love."

"Then I forgive *you*, but I am very angry with her."

Poor Vera! She was destined to be still more angry, and with more cause, with Mrs. Jamieson before very long. Meanwhile, the lovers sauntered slowly home, all unconscious of the storm which was to meet them on their return.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. RYOT TEMPEST IS DEFIED.

GRIEF had not made any serious ravages on Mrs. Jamieson's countenance. Its outward and visible signs were yet further diminished on that Saturday afternoon when Captain Raleigh was asking Vera to be his wife. Three months had elapsed since Mr. Jamieson departed this life, and his widow seized the first decent opportunity of discarding the weepers, widow's caps and collars, those orthodox symbols of woe, all of which had been thorns in the flesh to her. Mr. Ryot Tempest was not sufficiently versed in the science of feminine attire to know what precise alterations had taken place in Mrs. Jamieson's dress since he last saw her; the masculine mind rarely descends to details. All he knew was that the general effect was pleasing, and his friend looked younger and handsomer than ever.

Their friendship had made great strides within the last two months, and they were now on very intimate terms—so intimate that they did not feel obliged to talk for the mere sake of saying something. Mrs. Jamieson understood to a nicety how to make a man comfortable; in fact, she understood the superior sex thoroughly. She had made it her study from her youth up; she knew its strong points and its weak, its virtues and its vices. Above all, she knew its most vulnerable spot.

"Please make yourself quite at home. I can't let you smoke in this room, for fear of Mrs. Grundy and other visitors; but if you would like a pipe, we will go into the library," she said, when Mr. Tempest arrived.

"Thanks; I don't smoke," said Mr. Ryot Tempest.

Mrs. Jamieson gave a sigh of relief, for in point of fact the smell of smoke was most disagreeable to her; but she was one of those women who will patiently endure the fumes of tobacco for the sake of masculine society.

"Sit still and rest in your special chair, then," she said, wheeling a luxurious arm-chair up to the brightly burning fire, and taking up some knitting, which served a double purpose. The red wool made her pretty hands look whiter than ever, and also enabled her to pose as a Dorcas, as the result of her labour was destined, when finished by her maid, to adorn the shoulders of some poor woman.

"I feel quite proud of myself to-day. I have been to church, being All Saints' Day; and I have just taken a wreath up to poor Mr. Jamieson's grave. I am spared the trial you have to bear, of having your dear one buried in a foreign land. It is such a solace to be able to visit the grave of all one holds dearest whenever one feels inclined."

She was certainly a most charming woman, thought Mr. Ryot Tempest; so full of tender feeling for her lost husband; so delicately sympathetic with him in all his sorrow. She seemed to enter into all the details with such fine feeling, and she exercised such exquisite tact in expressing it. How strange that Vera should be blind to such feminine perfections! Her dislike to Mrs. Jamieson could certainly only be attributed to one source—jealousy.

"You are looking fagged; I am afraid you have been doing too much lately," said Mrs. Jamieson compassionately.

"Not more than usual," replied Mr. Tempest, as if he were the busiest man in the world, instead of a very idle one. "But the fact is, I have been very much alone this week."

"Ah! that loneliness, how sad it is. I know so well what you are suffering, my dear friend. How strange it is that the same cross should be laid upon us both, and yet we are so unlike; you the learned scholar, I the weak, ignorant woman."

"Not ignorant," said Mr. Tempest, gloating over the word scholar, for nothing pleased him so well as to be thought learned.

"Yes, ignorant by comparison with you," sweetly insisted Mrs. Jamieson. "But how is Vera?"

"Very well, and I think I may add, very happy."

"Ah! the young have the advantage over us elder ones: they soon forget."

"The truth is, a gentleman we met while we were at Avranches, and whose acquaintance we made under somewhat romantic circumstances, is now staying in the neighbourhood, and we have seen a good deal of him since he came."

"I understand; and would it be a desirable match?"

"Quite so; he is a man of very good family, and that is the first consideration. In point of fact, he is a connection of the Ryots, so we became intimate very quickly. He is in the —th; has just got his company and is home from India for a year on sick-leave. He is a man of some means, and a very charming, gentlemanly fellow."

"This is most interesting; I delight in anything in the shape of a love-affair. Do tell me more," exclaimed Mrs. Jamieson.

"There is no more to tell just at present, except that I have felt rather de trop lately."

"Ah! lovers are selfish creatures. I am sure it must be very lonely for you; you should come and see me oftener. And may I ask the name of the hero of this charming little story?"

"Captain Raleigh."

Mrs. Jamieson started and turned a shade or two paler as she repeated:

"Raleigh? Jack Raleigh? One of the Norfolk Raleighs?"

"The same. Do you know him?"

"Well. So well that I am amazed to hear he has been in this neighbourhood some days without paying me a visit. I knew him before I married."

She did not add that she, though Captain Raleigh's senior by seven or eight years, had flirted with him mercilessly, and then, luckily for him, had thrown him aside for the wealthier Mr. Jamieson. But while Mr. Tempest was uttering some commonplaces about the smallness of the world, Mrs. Jamieson was debating inwardly whether she should cry check to Vera's king or allow the game to go on a little longer. In the end, the temptation to interfere at once proved too strong for her. Much as she wished Vera to marry and relieve her of the duties of a step-mother, for which she felt she had no vocation, she could not bear to see herself supplanted in the affections of an old lover by a mere child, as she scornfully denominated Vera. So she resolved to speak.

"Of course you know Captain Raleigh is a Romanist?" she remarked in her sweetest tones.

"Indeed I know nothing of the kind. Surely you must be mistaken?"

"I fear not. His branch of the Raleighs are all Romanists, and always have been."

"Dear me, dear me! this is terrible news! I had no idea of it. Of course that will put an end to the matter at once. Nothing would induce me to allow Vera to marry a Catholic. It might seriously affect my position in the county, and it would certainly defeat all my hopes of obtaining any valuable preferment. Moreover, my conscience really would not allow me to countenance such a thing for a moment, though I fear you will think me very inconsistent to say so."

"Not at all. One sees things so differently when one is young. And though I was able to resist the very same temptation when I was a girl, I can so completely sympathise with the sacrifice of worldly prospects you so generously made. May I say I admire you so much for it?"

Mrs. Jamieson was treading on dangerous ground, and she knew it; but nothing venture nothing have; so to accent her speech she laid one white little hand gently on Mr. Tempest's arm just for a few seconds.

He coughed and coloured, and made a little deprecating gesture as he answered nervously:

"Thanks, my dear friend. And what would you advise me to do in this matter?"

"Put an end to it at once; cut the knot; don't attempt to untie it. The sooner it is done the better, for Vera's sake, poor child; she will sadly need a woman's sympathy. You men are very clever, but you don't understand us poor women in these affairs."

"If Vera would only confide in you," said Mr. Ryot Tempest, knowing that Vera was as likely to confide in Mark Brown as in Mrs. Jamieson.

"We must have patience; perhaps some day she will."

Mr. Ryot Tempest sighed, and soon after departed in a very restless mood. He would have given much to have read the feelings of his bereaved friend with regard to him; she would have given more to know the state of his feelings towards her. We are fortunately in a position to know both.

Mrs. Jamieson moved to the pier-glass when her visitor had departed, and gazed critically at herself. "I am handsome even in this trying crape. If I could but meet him in the evening—I always was a candlelight beauty—one evening in my black velvet and diamonds would finish him," she thought, as she gazed complacently at her good-looking person.

"Happy thought! I'll ask him to dinner," she muttered half aloud after a little pause. "Why didn't I think of it before? He'll come because the girl will want rousing after her lover has gone. Meanwhile I'll write to the bishop, and make him promise the next archdeaconry to my little friend. He will make a very good archdeacon and an excellent husband."

Then she peered closer at herself, and the scrutiny was satisfactory, for she added with a little thrill of pleasure: "The lines under my eyes are less marked than they were; Mr. Jamieson's temper made them. Ah, well! he is at rest—and so am I."

Meanwhile Mr. Ryot Tempest was trotting home, his little pulses beating fast as he bumped about on his pony, occasionally muttering to himself: "A fine figure, a very fine figure; and a charming woman."

He was much exercised about Vera and Captain Raleigh, and was by no means reckoning on his interview with them. He was disappointed, too, for he liked Captain Raleigh personally, and would have liked the connection; but nothing should induce him to let Vera marry a Catholic. But the image of Mrs. Jamieson kept plotting all other thoughts out of his mind, save that ever-recurring one: "A fine figure, a very fine figure."

"Is Miss Vera in the house, Mary?" was his first question on reaching home.

"No, sir; she is out with Captain Raleigh," said Mary.

"Very good; tell her I want her in my study as soon as she comes in."

Mary left the room outwardly unmoved, inwardly boiling with indignation.

"Cook, would you believe it? The master is going to have a finger in Miss Vera and the Captain's pie, as soon as they come home," she said, on reaching the kitchen, painful memories of "no followers allowed" inspiring her with sympathy.

"If I was the Captain, then, I'd chop his finger off with my sword," said Cook, mixing her metaphors and a pudding simultaneously, and brandishing a spoon in an alarming fashion.

"If I was cook and parlour-maid, I'd mind my own business, and not interfere with my master's," said a voice from the scullery, where Mark Brown was brushing his master's clothes.

"If I was a Baptist, I would not go to church on Sundays for all the masters and Tempests in the world," retorted Cook.

"And if I was in love with anyone who disappeared like some I know has, I'd find out where they were gone to. There is my bell; that is the Captain and Miss Vera," cried Mary.

While these compliments were being exchanged in the kitchen, Mr. Ryot Tempest was nervously awaiting Vera's return. Presently he heard her and Captain Raleigh come in, and a minute or so later there was a knock at his study-door.

"Come in, my dear," said the Rector, expecting to see Vera; but to his vexation it was Captain Raleigh, who with his most languid air entered the study and closed the door.

The interview was not a long one, though to Vera, who was eagerly awaiting the issue, it seemed interminable.

Captain Raleigh opened the battle at once.

"Mr. Ryot Tempest, I have come to ask your consent to my engagement with your daughter. Perhaps I ought to have spoken to you first, and I intended to have done so, but, as sometimes happens in similar cases, I could not wait."

"You—you have taken me rather by surprise, Captain Raleigh. But before I reply, allow me to ask you a question: Are you a member of that Church which I conceive to be an Italian mission set up in this country?"

"If you allude to the Roman Catholic Church, I am," said Captain Raleigh with a slight smile.

"Then, in that case, I cannot consent to your engagement with Vera. In fact, I must request that all intercourse between you shall cease from this day; except on one condition, which would, of course, alter my decision, for I need scarcely say I have no other objection to you."

"And that condition?" said Captain Raleigh quietly.

"That you become a Protestant. I shall be happy——"

"Heaven forbid!" shouted Captain Raleigh in a tone which made Mr. Tempest start, and as he spoke his pale face grew paler, his dark, sleepy eyes flashed fire, and he changed the somewhat listless attitude he had assumed. Now he stood upright, as though about to lead his company into the thick of the battle, and Mr. Ryot

Tempest felt that whatever else he might be, he was a brave man and a good soldier.

"Sir, I love your daughter with my whole heart, but I love my God with my whole soul and my Church with my whole mind; so we will have no talk of apostacy, if you please," concluded the Captain, unconsciously parodying a remark of a celebrated Frenchman.

"I—I was only about to say that I should be happy to go into the question with you."

"Thank you; I fear that the result would hardly be satisfactory from your point of view if we did so. Am I then to understand you desire my engagement with your daughter—indeed, our acquaintance—to cease?"

"If you please. I regret it sincerely, but my conscience tells me it is the best, indeed, the only course."

"Very good, sir. As long as Miss Ryot Tempest remains a minor I bow to your decision, and I give you my word as an officer and a gentleman to hold no communication with her from this day till her twenty-first birthday, unknown to you. On that happy day I shall, with your daughter's permission, renew my offer, which I trust will then terminate in our marriage. I may add that Miss Tempest entirely shares my views and intentions in this matter."

"Sir," said Mr. Tempest with his most dignified air, which was singularly suggestive of a cock-robin, "the mere fact of attaining her twenty-first birthday does not, in my opinion, release my daughter from the obedience she owes her only surviving parent. My objection to her marriage with you will be as strong when she is twenty-one as it is now, and I have no reason to suppose that she will disregard my wishes and commands. So do not allow yourself to be buoyed up with any false hopes."

"I have no fears on that score; but we will discuss the matter further when Vera comes of age. I will now, with your permission, say good-bye to her before I leave, and I trust that though this interview has been a very painful one for us both, we are parting on friendly terms."

"Captain Raleigh, you have been frank with me and I will be the same with you, and I tell you plainly I shall take every step in my power to hinder your union with my daughter, and that solely on account of your religious views."

"I understand perfectly, and I wish you good-day," said Captain Raleigh with a calm assurance that irritated Mr. Tempest, for it warned him he must expect strong opposition from Vera. He sat inwardly shrinking from an interview with her, when the door opened and that young person stood before him pale and determined.

Mr. Ryot Tempest had seen his daughter in a pet; he had seen her wilful and naughty; he had seen her wild with grief at the time of her mother's death, but he had never seen her as she now looked.

She seemed to have grown suddenly from a wilful child to a woman, brave, determined, capable of enduring, and resolved to suffer if need be. Her beautiful face would have been hard but for the soft look which lightened her lovely eyes and told her father more eloquently than any words that her heart was already in someone else's keeping.

"Father, Captain Raleigh has told me you have refused your consent to our engagement, and that he has promised not to see or write to me without your consent till I am of age."

"Yes, my dear; Captain Raleigh has so far behaved very properly; it is what he proposes to do when you are twenty-one that I take exception to; no doubt though, then, if you do not now, you will see there was no other course for me to pursue."

"Papa, I never shall. I consider your decision most unjust——"

"Vera, such language is most unbecoming a child to her parent," interrupted Mr. Tempest, nervously.

"I can't help it; I must say it. My mother was a Catholic, and I was baptised by Father Ambrose into the same church; so it is unjust to separate us on religious grounds," cried Vera, breathing quickly, her little white hands trembling with excitement.

"Vera, you amaze me; you are forgetting yourself strangely," said Mr. Tempest, crossing his little legs and beating the devil's tattoo on the elbow of his chair.

"I don't think I am, but I must say it all the same. I hate injustice. Here a bright blush mantled Vera's cheek and she dropped her eyes for a moment, but raised them and looked full in her father's face as she continued:

"I love Captain Raleigh. I should not like to marry him in defiance of you, but you must not try me too far. If I do not marry him I will never marry anyone else in this world."

Mr. Ryot Tempest sprang to his feet when his daughter thus threw down the gauntlet, and, losing his temper, exclaimed irritably:

"Leave the room, Vera."

"I am going, papa; I only wish you to understand that as I am still a minor I will obey you so far that I will neither see nor write to Captain Raleigh until I am twenty-one. After that I will make no promise."

Having thus delivered herself, Miss Ryot Tempest left the study with much dignity, but on reaching the drawing-room, where Captain Raleigh was awaiting her, her dignity forsook her, and she threw herself sobbing wildly into her lover's arms.

There for the present we will leave her, feeling sure that neither she nor Captain Raleigh would object to the arrangement.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. CANTER ENTERTAINS AN UNWELCOME GUEST.

"THIS is a queer world, Cook," said Mary.

"It isn't the world, it is the folks who are in it; but what is the matter now?" said Cook.

"What is the matter? Why, master, to be sure; it is all his doing; sending Miss Vera's Captain off like this! And now he has dragged her out to dinner to-night, and she'd far rather have been at home."

"How do you know?"

"Know? Why, I dressed her, and beautiful she looked for all her deep mourning; but she was that pale and her eyes that mournful, I could not bear to see her; and she never so much as looked at herself in the glass."

"Poor young lady! I suppose she don't care how she looks now there is no Captain to look at her," said Cook, sympathetically.

"I do feel for her, for I know how I should feel if my Jim was parted from me; I almost hate master, that I do."

"More shame on you, then," exclaimed Mark, who came in to the kitchen in time to hear this last remark.

"None of your impertinence, Mark, please; you have driven Janet Foreman away from Woodford with your folly, but you don't drive me from the Rectory, I can tell you. I mean to stay and take care of Miss Vera, whether you tell tales of me—as you are always doing—to the master or not," said Mary, tossing her head.

"That is a queer business about Janet Foreman; I wonder you don't find out where she is gone, Mark; you were crazy after her when she was here," said Cook.

"Perhaps I know," said Mark, sulkily; but not all the flattery Mary condescended to bestow upon him, nor the hot supper of fried pork and onions—his favourite dish—to which Cook treated him, could induce him to say another syllable on the subject of Janet.

The truth was all his inquiries had hitherto been in vain; no one in Woodford but Reuben and Vera knew where Janet was, and Reuben was very reticent whenever Mark broached the subject. Mark believed Janet was in service, but where he did not know, and he saw at present no chance of discovering; but the taunts of the maidservants annoyed him, so he took refuge in pretending to have found her out. Strange to say, it had not at present occurred to him to suspect she had gone to Mrs. Canter's, but if once that idea struck him, he would undoubtedly pursue his prey.

While Vera's affairs and Janet's disappearance were being discussed in the Rectory kitchen, Mrs. Jamieson was entertaining Vera and her father and the curate of the parish at dinner. Mrs. Jamieson looked handsomer than ever in a black velvet dress, with her celebrated diamonds in her hair and on her neck, and she did her best to fas-

cinate Vera, who, however, was not inclined to be fascinated or fascinating. The curate, who was nothing if not ritualistic, bored her; he arrived at Mrs. Jamieson's house full of the union of his own Church with the "Great Western branch," meaning the Roman Catholic Church, but Vera cooled his zeal in this direction by saying shortly, "I am not interested in railways." His conversation then ran on vestments, coloured stoles and the eastward position, and had no interest for her, while the sacerdotal airs he was pleased to assume so irritated her that she privately longed to box his ears. As this longing was not one that could be gratified, she took refuge in the piano when they re-entered the drawing-room, and so charmed the curate, who was musical, by her singing, that he went home determined to reconsider prayerfully the question of the celibacy of the clergy, of which he had hitherto been a fervid advocate, and inclined to desire a union with Vera even more ardently than he longed for the union of Christendom.

If Vera refused to be fascinated by Mrs. Jamieson, her father was less obdurate, and as he sank back in the fly which conveyed him and Vera home, he exclaimed admiringly:

"A magnificent woman!"

"I beg your pardon, papa?" said Vera, shortly.

"I—I merely remarked what a very handsome woman Mrs. Jamieson is," said Mr. Ryot Tempest, nervously.

"Very handsome, but what shocking taste to appear out of mourning when her husband has only been dead three or four months."

"Out of mourning! my dear Vera. Why, she was in black."

"Black velvet is not mourning, neither are diamonds, except at Court, when ordered."

This was a matter on which Mr. Ryot Tempest conceived the feminine mind more capable of pronouncing judgment than he was, so he did not contradict his daughter, with whom he desired to keep on good terms. For a reconciliation had taken place between them the day after Captain Raleigh's departure. Vera's conscience told her she had not been as respectful as she ought to have been to her father during their interview, so she made the "amende honorable," and they then agreed the subject should not be mentioned any more between them till her twenty-first birthday. Vera bore the separation from Captain Raleigh bravely at first; the joy of loving and being loved was still a new experience; but as time wore on, and Christmas drew near, her courage began to flag, and her letters to Norah Canter, who was her confidante, grew longer and more frequent. Norah feared this new trouble would tell on her darling's health, and wrote to Rex, begging him to use all the influence he possessed with his father to induce him to consent to the engagement.

On Christmas day, Vera's flagging spirits rose to a high level, for Captain Raleigh sent an exquisite bouquet and a large packet of songs to her, under cover to her father, with a note, hoping Mr. Ryot Tempest would permit Vera to accept them, since flowers and music were

dmissible gifts when no engagement existed. Mr. Ryot Tempest llowed Vera to have them, and although he declined to let her rite and acknowledge them, he nevertheless promised to do so imself. And he kept his promise.

A day or two after Christmas, Mark Brown happened to be in the ost-office when the letters were being stamped, and his quick eye aught sight of one in Reuben's handwriting, directed to Norah anter. In an instant it flashed into Mark's mind that Janet was ith her aunt, and the next moment he had decided to ask for a oliday, and go over to Marling. As he left the post-office, how-ver, it began to snow, and by the next morning the snow was so eep that he knew until the thaw set in he could not be spared rom the Rectory for a whole day; so he was obliged to wait and atch the weather as patiently as he could.

The elements apparently were against him, for the snow lasted a onth, and it was the end of January before Mark could attempt to et to Marling. But he had had plenty of time to lay his plans so ell, that he had now no fear lest they should be thwarted by Vera, ho, if she knew he was going out for the day, might suspect where e was going, and write and warn Janet. Accordingly, it was not till the ost was in on the day Mark proposed going to Marling, that he asked is master if he could kindly spare him for the day, as he had had a tter that morning from a sister who was dying and wished to see him.

"Where is Mark, papa? I want Firefly saddled at once," said era, about ten o'clock that morning.

"Gone out for the day, my dear, to see his sister who is dying."

"His sister? Why, he hasn't a sister; he is an only child, and a ad one too. Never mind; the boy and I between us can manage irefly, I daresay," returned Vera, who instantly suspected where lark was gone, and as quickly decided to do her best to prevent is finding Janet.

She was soon mounted on Firefly, and rode off to Ashchurch to legraph to Norah, telling her Mark Brown was on his way to larling; this she discovered for a fact at the station, where she also und out that it was a nice question which would arrive first, Mark rown or her telegram.

It was a Monday, and Monday being no longer washing-day, ving to the unprecedented obstinacy of the Marling people, Mrs. anter's time hung heavily on her hands, and on Mondays her nd frequently fell heavily on the little Canters, for her temper was t to be easily ruffled on these occasions. The world was turned psy-turvy by these good people, whom Norah scornfully designated ols, and the little Canters were turned topsy-turvy by their mother, ho avenged her wrongs on their innocent little bodies on the ightest provocation, till they wished with all their little hearts onday was still washing-day, and the world and themselves allowed maintain their normal positions.

Alas! In this unregenerate world in these degenerate days this wish was not likely to be fulfilled, but Mrs. Canter took care that if the Marling people did not know, as she averred, whether they were standing on their heads or their heels, the little Canters should know to their cost which end of their little persons was uppermost. Perhaps this was a precautionary measure taken lest they should dare to grow up with any revolutionary ideas on the subject of washing day. Perhaps it was only a vent for the righteous indignation Mrs. Canter felt with the world in general, and the Marling world in particular. There was some excuse for her irascibility just now; she was troubled about many things: especially about Vera and her engagement. Then rumours had reached her of Mr. Ryot Tempest's intimacy with Mrs. Jamieson and its probable consequences, which, for Vera's sake, she deeply deplored. And last but not least, she was most anxious about Janet, who was shortly expecting to become a mother, and who was still urged by Rex to keep her marriage a secret until he had received the second sum of money from his father, which would not be for another six months.

"It isn't fair to you, Janet," said Mrs. Canter on this particular Monday morning, as she and Janet sat working over the fire.

"I don't mind so long as Rex wishes it kept secret," said Janet.

"But I do. Why, any day your father might pop in here upon us, and it would just drive him out of his mind, unless you were to tell him the truth."

"I could not. I would rather father killed me than break my promise to Rex."

"Don't be a fool, Janet! I haven't patience to hear you. One would suppose Master Rex was a god. Law, bless me, girl! he is naught but a man, after all; and the very best of them are poor things compared to a woman who never made a fool of herself about one. But there, you might go from here to Australia and not come across two women who had not gone silly about a man some time in their lives. What they all find in a man to turn their heads beats me; for my part, I never saw much to admire in any of them."

"Oh, Aunt Norah, how can you say so! Why, I know you think my Rex is perfect."

"I think you'll soon spoil him if he is, if you mean to give in to him in everything. A happier couple than Canter and I never lived, and why? Because I never gave in to him in my life, so he never expected it. Who's that, I wonder? I'll go, Janet," said Norah, rising to open the door in answer to a knock.

It was Vera's telegram. Mrs. Canter hastily tore open the envelope, and read as follows:—

"Mark will be with you soon after twelve to-day. Hope this will arrive first."

"And it is gone twelve. Here, read it, Janet. What are we to do?

Janet read the telegram, and rising hastily said: "Oh, Aunt Norah, we can never keep it from him! I'll go upstairs and hide there; but the children—they are sure to let it out."

"Not if I know it! You leave them to me; I'll settle them. Make a fire upstairs, and I'll send you up some dinner. I must keep him here, or he'll get gossiping in the village."

"Mother, there is a telegram been sent to you. I met the girl, and she told me. Who is it from?" exclaimed Mary Jane, bursting in from the garden with the baby, which she had been airing, in her arms.

"My word, my lady! I'll teach you to ask questions. Give me that baby, and you take that, and take yourself upstairs till I send for you. Just let me hear a sound from you, and you'll remember it till your dying day."

"That" was a box on the ears, skilfully dodged by Mary Jane, who retired whimpering upstairs, where she was amazed and comforted to find Janet was to share her banishment, but too fearful of the consequences to indulge her curiosity by inquiring into the cause of her cousin's exile.

Mary Jane being thus summarily disposed of, there remained three boys to be silenced. The baby and the idiot boy could not talk, so they escaped scot-free. The boys were expected in from school every minute, and Mrs. Canter went to her garden gate to look for them. There they were, half-way up the lane, playing marbles; and there, a little way behind them, was Mark Brown. If he overtook them, Janet's hiding-place would be known.

"The young rascals! I'll teach them to play marbles in this thaw," said Mrs. Canter, picking up her dress and putting the skirt over her head so as to form a hood. She ran to meet her sons, shouting to them as she went. The boys heard her, picked up their marbles, and flew past her into the house, knowing what to expect on Monday morning, but unconscious that the presence of Mark Brown in their rear had added to the enormity of their offence, or at least to its consequences.

Mrs. Canter caught Jack, the youngest of the three, as he tried to slip past her, and lifting him up she tucked his curly head under her arm, and settled with him on her way to the house, where she seated him howling on a chair by the wall; and seizing his brothers in turn, made them regret for a few minutes that marbles had ever been invented.

"There! perhaps you'll come home from school straight to-morrow. And now there is a gentleman coming to dinner, and if one of you dares to utter one word—mind, one word—from the time he enters the house till the time he leaves it, you'll never forget it as long as you live! And you don't one of you move till your dinner is ready."

The trio, howling in chorus, were seated in a row by the wall, and

Mrs. Canter had scarcely finished speaking when Mark Brown knocked at the door, whereupon the howls subsided into sobs.

"Law, Mark, what a start you have given me! Who'd have thought of seeing you? Come in and get a good warm, while I see after the dinner. I am rather late to-day, but I have had such a trouble with the children: those three there are all in disgrace. Don't you even look at them, Mark, please; I have just been chastising them, and Mary Jane is as bad: she is getting to a masterful age, so I have sent her up to her bedroom. And what news do you bring from Woodford?"

As Mrs. Canter talked, she was busying herself about the dinner; and Mark being very hungry, and finding he was to be treated to liver and bacon, endeavoured to hide the disappointment he felt at not finding Janet.

While the liver was frying, Mark regaled his hostess with the Woodford news. There wasn't much. Miss Vera's love-affair he supposed rightly Norah knew of; folks did say his master was going to marry again, but he did not know how true it was; leastways Miss Vera knew nothing about it he was sure; and having thoroughly discussed his master's affairs, Mark descended to village gossip as he ate his dinner.

"Reuben is very dull now Janet has gone away," said Mark at last, hoping to get some news of her whereabouts out of Mrs. Canter.

"Ah, I am afraid he is, but Woodford was too cold for Janet; she isn't very strong."

"And where is she gone to? Nobody seems to know," said Mark.

"That is more than I can tell you," replied Mrs. Canter.

"Mother, Cousin Janet must ——" began Jack, forgetful of his mother's warning, in his anxiety to inform her and their guest of Janet's probable hiding-place.

"Oh, you will, will you? Come with me," said Mrs. Canter, seizing little Jack by one arm and transferring him and his plate to the laundry, Jack sobbing and begging for mercy as he went.

"There, don't cry any more; stay and eat your dinner here like a good boy, and I'll forgive you this time as long as you forgot," said Mrs. Canter, who was really a fond if a strict mother. And leaving Jack, who was her favourite child, by the copper fire, she returned to keep watch over the other boys.

In her brief absence Mark had discovered Janet's hat hanging on a peg just inside the laundry, which opened out of the kitchen. Norah had forgotten it was there till she saw by Mark's face he had recognised it, but she was equal to the occasion, and took the bull by the horns.

"That Mary Jane, what a tiresome child she is! Here's her hat hanging up in the laundry. It used to be Janet's, but she is very

kind to my children, and gives them many of her old things." And so saying Norah brought the hat into the kitchen, and Mark's suspicions were once more laid to rest.

"What train did you think of going back by?"

"There is one at four; I'll go by that," said Mark.

"Well, if you like, I'll go for a walk with you as soon as I have packed the children off to school; Monday is a lost day with me here," said Mrs. Canter.

"Is business slack, then?" asked Mark.

"Bless you, no; I have double the work here I had at Woodford. I shall have two washerwomen at work all to-morrow, and the two together won't get through as much as I shall; but the folks here have town ways—dirty ways, too, I call them. I never get the linen till Monday evening, here."

Once on this topic, Mrs. Canter never knew when to stop; she interrupted herself to send the children to school, Mary Jane in Janet's hat, and she resumed the subject again as she showed Mark the lions of Marling, which consisted of the church, some ruins and the village street. Her sole object in imposing this uncongenial work of lionising Mark upon herself was to prevent him from holding any conversation with the villagers, and so discovering she had a beautiful young married woman, whose husband was in Australia, living with her, whom, in spite of Janet's assumed name, Mark would no doubt recognise as Janet.

The afternoon seemed interminable to Mrs. Canter, who was longing to get Mark safely out of Marling, and glad indeed was she when it was time to go to the station. She waited to see Mark into a carriage, and then took leave of him and hurried home. On her way back she met Mary Jane and the boys coming out of school, and feeling she had been unduly severe in the morning making them suffer for Mark's persistence, she took them into the baker's and bought some scones for tea, laden with which they all returned rejoicing to Janet: Norah rejoicing because she had, as she flattered herself, so successfully baffled Mark Brown, the children because they were once more restored to favour. Mrs. Canter's temper had this recommendation: though alarming while it lasted, it always left her gentle and happy; like a thunderstorm, it cleared the air.

"He is gone, Janet, and a harder day's work I have seldom done—washing is play to it; what with walking and talking, I am tired out. Come down and let us have tea," said Norah on her return.

"Mother," cried Mary Jane from the kitchen, "they have only given us six scones for sixpence; shall I run back and tell them we always have seven?"

"Yes, if you like, but make haste back and don't stop to speak to anyone; be quick now."

"Does Mark suspect I am here?" asked Janet as she followed her aunt downstairs.

"He did, or he would not have come. It wasn't love of me, you may be sure, brought him over to Marling, but I think he has gone back as wise as he came. But if it hadn't been for Miss Vera, Janet, he would have come in and caught you here, as sure as my name is Canter. My word, you've had a narrow escape to-day; I felt so nervous I could scarcely touch a mouthful of dinner."

"Nor could I; I was thinking so of Mark."

"And he was thinking of you. He is desperately fond of you, Janet; he won't get over it in a hurry, either. Love is like small-pox: if you have it badly, it marks you for life."

"Did he say anything about father?"

"Only that he was very well, and missed you very much. I think I must go over for a few days and see your father, or we shall have him over here next," said Mrs. Canter.

Janet burst into tears, and, leaning her beautiful head on the table, sobbed out:

"I feel like some hunted animal. I live in daily dread of being seen, even by my own dear father. How I wish Rex would let me tell him!"

"Cousin Janet, have you been naughty to-day, as well as all of us?" asked little Jack, nestling up to his cousin.

"No, Janet isn't naughty, Jack. What made you think she was?" asked his mother.

"'Cause she is crying, and 'cause she had her dinner upstairs with Mary Jane."

Here the return of Mary Jane, jubilant with the success of her walk, interrupted the conversation, for she possessed more than her share of that vice generally but erroneously supposed to be peculiar to her sex—curiosity, which Mark Brown's visit had greatly excited; and she brought with her, in addition to the seventh scone, a piece of news that disturbed the sense of relief which her mother and cousin were congratulating themselves upon feeling.

"Mother, Mark Brown isn't gone home yet; I saw him in the village just now."

"Don't talk nonsense, Mary Jane, when your own mother saw him safe in the train. You have made a mistake," said Mrs. Canter.

"No, I haven't. There is no one like him in Marling," persisted Mary Jane.

"You didn't dare to speak one word to him, I hope?" said Norah, in an awful voice.

"No," said the child; and Norah, though half-doubting her first statement, knew the last was correct; for Mary Jane was truthful.

She was also right in her report; for Mark Brown didn't leave Marling by the four o'clock train that day after all.

(*To be continued.*)

FISH CATCHING ON THE DOGGER.

"WHAT cheer, O? How are ye, sir? I've jest a got 'ome from the dreery Dowger," was the unconventional salutation addressed to an inexperienced landsman, who loved the streets of the Metropolis better than the wind-swept sea (just as Charles Lamb, in his day, preferred the lamplit thoroughfares of London to the most charming country scenery), and who, until then, had never even heard of the "Dowger," dreary or otherwise.

The Dogger, as it is called by ordinary folks: "Dawger" or "Dowger," as it is variously pronounced by the deep-sea trawlers: is a great submarine sandbank in the German Ocean. It is about three hundred miles from the mouth of the Thames, seventy miles from the coast of Jutland, lying within the latitudes of 55 and 56, and extending about a hundred and seventy miles in length from North to South, by sixty-five miles in breadth from East to West. It is not the only fishing-ground frequented by the deep-sea fisherman. There are others in the same mid-sea; such as the "Silver pits," and the "Botney gut;" but the main sphere of operations is undoubtedly the great sandbank known as the Dogger.

The waters which wash the Dogger are, in their very best moods, by no means of the most placable order.

Even in the heart of summer: when, perchance, the sun has been shining for sixteen or seventeen hours in the unclouded sky, and the surface of the ocean has been outspread like a glittering sheet of transparent blue: suddenly the great rush of waters which sweep round the north-eastern tail of the Dogger may be set in motion. Ere the darkness of the brief summer night has come down, the strong nor'-easter in its fury may have smitten the waves and sent them careering, as the seamen say, "mountains high," causing the great fleet of fishing vessels to scatter in all directions, dancing and bobbing on the face of the ocean like a vast multitude of floats on the rolling waters.

And if such things happen in the warm and smiling summer, what shall be said of the boisterous autumn and the rugged winter; when the rigging of the little vessels which ply on the Dogger is oft-times one mass of ice, and the tackle cannot be made use of until the frost, by which it has been congealed, is dissipated by plenteous libations of boiling water?

Then, indeed, the surface of the Dogger is too frequently a scene of storm, toil and disaster, such as may, indeed, be equalled on other seas, but cannot well be exceeded in respect of the fury of the elements which are at play, and the heroism of the human beings who are exposed to the buffeting of the pitiless storm.

The Dogger Bank is thus the main fishing ground of the deep-sea trawlers, a class of men of whose very existence hundreds and thousands of the English people are entirely ignorant, notwithstanding the fact that they almost daily share in the fruits of their arduous labours. Yet, on that weird North Sea, some ten to fifteen thousand men and youths are busily engaged through "summer's heat and winter's snow," in all weathers and at all hours, in securing what is, after all, but a very inadequate return for their spell of weary toil by day, and their lonely watch in the darksome night, when the wind shrieks in the shrouds and the boisterous waves rage unceasingly around the tiny fishing craft.

Truly there is little of comfort or ease in the trawler's life at sea.

What sort of a personage is this deep-sea fish-catcher?

In reply it can be said that he is decidedly superior to his brother fisherman whose exertions are confined to the waters which wash the shores of Great Britain. His wits are quicker, his phraseology more picturesque, his manner more free and his spirits more boisterous. It would perhaps be erroneous to say that he is possessed of higher skill in his craft, but his powers of endurance are greater; and, accustomed as he is to more deadly and imminent danger, his heroism is tried and proven to a wider extent.

In appearance he need not fear comparison with any other class of seafaring Englishmen. If he should chance to be short of stature, he is certain to be muscular and firmly knit together; if, as is more usually the case, he is a man of powerful build, it will be found that he is remarkably well-proportioned, broad-chested, erect, supple, and possessing a voice whose hearty "What cheer, O, what cheer?" may be heard with ease in a far distant fishing smack, loud and clear above the clamour of the waves.

His life is filled up with eight weeks' unceasing labour in the German Ocean (sometimes only seventy miles from land, but more commonly at a distance of 250 or 300 miles) and one week's rest at home, during which his vessel is refitted and undergoes necessary repairs. Thus, for some fifty days only, in the whole year, is he to be found in his habitation ashore—at Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Hull or Grimsby—and for the remainder of the three hundred and sixty five, his home is on the water, in the dismal cabin of his fishing smack.

In former years the deep-sea trawler was, like the breakers by which he is buffeted, a wild and reckless fellow. He was ignorant, except of the technicalities of his craft; he was drunken; he was cut off from all the amenities of true social life; his highest enjoyment consisted in a "spree" on the foreign *coper* at sea, or a prolonged drinking bout in a wretched alehouse ashore.

There is now, however, strong and conclusive evidence that a decided change has come over the character of the deep-sea trawlers. They are spoken of as, in the main, pious, upright, gentle, peaceable

citizens; as good in all relations of life as men who abstain from returning evil for evil; and, indeed, if their most enthusiastic admirers can be credited, they are notable specimens of moral and spiritual excellence.

And for this marvellous change which has come over the deep-sea fisherman's character, let honour be given to whom honour is due.

A stranger in any of these floating towns on the North Sea will readily discover the pioneer of social and moral reformation amongst the trawlers, in a certain vessel which cruises with the fleets and is not merely a religious centre, but also a free hospital for injured smacksmen, the storehouse of much miscellaneous literature, and a general rendezvous for the hearty seamen who delight in the joyous "What cheer, O?" and a grip of the hand which only the muscles of a trawler could sustain without discomfort.

The smacksman was, erewhile, an uncontrollable social outlaw; he is now a staid, sober citizen: religious, but free from maudlin sentiment, and without a taint of puritanical sourness. Perhaps he will by and by evolve into something even higher and nobler; but be that as it may, it is assuredly a triumph to have displaced the obnoxious semi-savage by the sober citizen and the religious man.

The run to the Dogger Bank may be made in a trawling smack from either of the great seaports which are headquarters of the deep-sea fishery, or by steamer plying between London and the fleets.

The passage from the Thames is sometimes accomplished in twenty-four hours, but more frequently the stranger on his way to the fishing ground is pent up in the comfortless cabin of the steam cutter (or compelled to pace the deck in all the agonies of extreme mal-de-mer) for thirty-six, or sometimes forty-eight hours.

On the steamship there is abundant room for fish-boxes and their contents, but for people other than the crew the accommodation is scanty. There is plenty of food to be had—always assuming that one is none too fastidious in his taste; but the passenger to the deep-sea fishery must be content to take his slumbers, if need be, on a hard locker, and may count himself happy if he passes the night without being precipitated by the rolling and lurching of the vessel from the said hard locker to an equally comfortless floor.

In the summer time the voyage is attended with a minimum of trouble; and "a strange sight it is and a beautiful," at break of day, or when the sun is setting, to run into the midst of a great fleet of fishing smacks, numbering perhaps 150 sail, their tanned canvas glittering in the golden sunlight like so many wings of gossamer.

Each smack is ketch-rigged, registered as a trawler of the port from which she hies, and carries six or seven of a crew, who are known respectively as mate, third hand, etc. She is a vessel of from 50 to 80 tons burden, and, as is but natural and right, is a craft calculated to combat with the treacherous billows of the German Ocean more adequately than any other of the smaller class of vessel.

These fishing smacks cost from £800 to £1,200, and they mostly belong to large companies whose business it is (if the objectionable expression may be allowed) to "exploit" the fishermen for the benefit of their numerous shareholders. The "exploiting," however, has not been a financial success, for nearly all these great companies have sustained most serious losses during the past five years; and, sad to tell, there is as yet no immediate prospect of better times.

But it is not only the shareholders who suffer. The patient, heroic, deft and hard-working fish catcher on the "dreary Dowger" is, after all, the chief loser; for it is he who has passed through the hardships incidental to the deep-sea trawling, trudging the deck in the icy cold night, uncheered by aught save the innumerable stars that look down upon him from the silent heaven.

It is he who has toiled and troubled, in order to supply the London markets with fish, large trunks of which have been disposed of for no higher sum than *sixpence!* Such a return is bad enough truly for the stay-at-home "owner," but it is doubly trying for the seamen who are practically exiled from English skies, from English comforts, and all the joys and excitements which are within reach of the ordinary British workman. It is possible to exaggerate the trials of the smacksmen, but it is impossible to overdraw the colours of their lonely and isolated existence for periods of eight weeks at a stretch in the midst of the melancholy ocean.

On leaving the steam cutter, the landsman visitor will be transferred in the smack's boat to the particular vessel for which he is bound. On arriving alongside, he will be hoisted unceremoniously over the bulwarks, where he will find, in all probability, a slippery deck and scanty room in which to steady himself on the heaving vessel.

On descending below deck, he will be ushered into a dingy, smoky, ill-ventilated cabin—I speak of an ordinary trawler—a room which is shared in common by all hands on the smack, including the skipper. The latter, if he be a pious man, will maintain a certain amount of decorous discipline in the little chamber; but if the master be a careless, rollicking fellow, the old headlong animal elements in humanity will occasionally have free play.

The entire vessel is divided into two parts—one for the men and another for the fishes; but the latter, as befits the consequence of a receptacle for the more important article of the two, is by far the larger and more capacious. Here the empty fish-boxes are stowed when received from the fish-carrying steamer, but filled with fish packed in ice when awaiting delivery to the London, Lowestoft, Hull, or Grimsby cutter. In the crew's cabin the men eat, drink, sleep, and smoke; some read the Bible, and some books of the simpler sort; others spin interminable yarns, more or less true; and all drag out, as best they may, that happiest part of their existence when they are free from the arduous duties which fall to their lot while

engaged in watch on deck, or occupied with the various details incidental to the daily fishing operations.

The smacksmen, as a rule, sleep in their work-a-day garb. Descending from the lonely night-watch, cold, weary and not infrequently saturated to the skin, the exhausted toiler simply sinks upon the bare floor, or at best tumbles into a comfortless bunk, and finds, in deep slumber, a brief respite from his cheerless and dangerous toil. When the time for resumption of work again comes round, he rises, with clothes undried and stiffened limbs, and sets himself as he best may to re-commence the struggle with the elements which is an inevitable attendant of his labour as a fish-catcher on the Dogger.

The most important vessel in the fleet—the "admired of all admirers"—is now usually a certain smack flying a well-known flag, which is, as has already been stated, the pioneer of religion, philanthropy, and the civilising influences of social life amongst the deep-sea trawlers.

But until a few years ago a very different vessel was wont to accompany the great North Sea fishing fleets. This was a foreign craft known as the "Coper."

The "Coper" was a ship flying the Dutch or Belgian flag, but more commonly the former; and she sailed from one or other of the chief maritime ports in those two countries with a large cargo of tobacco, vile spirits, and bad literature. Thus was the sturdy animalism of the poor North Sea trawler effectually administered to at sea, and it is not too much to say that the arrival of one of these foreign cruisers was generally the prelude to a wild scene of debauchery, and almost cannibal ferocity.

Such events are happily a portion of the past. Good and cheap tobacco may be purchased on the Mission Ship; healthy literature is supplied; and the influence of the foreign craft is at an end. Happy is it for the deep-sea trawler that such is the case! Many a tragedy has been enacted on that wild strip of sea—many a scene dark and criminal—whose prime cause was the presence of the Dutch trader; and many a man now sleeps on the bed of the ocean who might have been alive and well, had it not been for the same evil agency.

Twice during the twenty-four hours—once by day and again in the night—the great trawl net is shot overboard.

The night-haul is, however, by far the more valuable of the two. The trawlers, indeed, reckon that one night-haul is worth two taken by day. During the night the vast bag net, attached to its enormous trawl-beam, scours the bottom of the sea, and, in the morning, after a long spell of hard labour, it is heaved in-board, and its contents emptied upon the deck.

In the haul, if it is a prolific one, a large quantity of sole, plaice, turbot, gurnet, cod, whiting, haddock, and such like, will be included.

The cleaning and packing of the fish in suitable boxes for convey-

ance by steamer to the London markets then follows, there being, as the reader will already have gathered, a regular service of cutters between the Metropolis and the Deep-Sea Fishery. The sole or haddock, which the London fishmonger declares to be in prime condition and to have been actually "caught yesterday morning," was forsooth brought up in the trawl a week ago on the "Dreary Dowger," and made the long journey of 250 miles to town amid a thick layer of ice in a big fish-box! Oh, nimble tongue of the astute trader!

Most curious and sometimes startling relics are occasionally brought up in the trawl net. These vary in importance and interest, from the child's plaything to the ghastly skeleton. Many a human skull has been tumbled on to the slippery deck, with its ghoulish, grinning teeth, furnishing a fitting opportunity for a North Sea Hamlet (if such there were) to exclaim: "Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment that were wont to get the table in a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning."

The North Sea trawler is thus interesting alike through his personality, his long sojourn on the ocean, and the nature of his work. Philanthropy and education will, between them, do great things for him; and just as there is at present no finer English seaman, so, ere long, there will, in all probability, be no worthier specimen of the hard-headed, upright, heroic, well-informed English working citizen.

And the romance of his life of toil and trouble will abide. The blasts of Heaven will continue to beat around him; the wild Nor'-easter will not cease to sweep round the tail of the Dogger, carrying destruction in its course; the waves will still buffet him; he must in the fierce encounter suffer and suffer again. But in the future he will be made to feel, far more than he has done in the past, that his existence is not unknown to his countrymen; and that many good wishes and hearty sympathies are with him, as he spends the lonely hours, "placed far amid the melancholy main."

ALEXANDER GORDON.

FEATHERSTON'S STORY.

AT THE MAISON ROUGE.

IT was a fine, frosty day, and the first of December. The sun shone on the fair streets of Sainteville, and on the small congregation turning out of the English Protestant church after morning ervice.

Lavinia Preen went straight home. There she found that Madame Cardiac, who was to spend the rest of the day with her—Monsieur having gone to Lille—had not yet arrived, though the French church Evangélique was always over before the English. After glancing at Flore in the kitchen, busy over the fine ducks, Lavinia set off for the Rue Pomme Cuite.

She met Mary Cardiac turning out of it. "Let us go and sit nder the wall in the sun," said Mary; "it is too early yet for the boat."

This was a high wall belonging to the strong north gates of the own, near Madame Cardiac's. The sun shone full upon the benches eneath it, which it sheltered from the bleak winds; in front was a atch of green grass, on which the children ran about amidst the raight poplar trees. It was very pleasant, sitting there, even on his December day; bright and cheerful; the wall behind them was uite warm, the sunshine rested upon all.

Sitting there, Lavinia Preen told Madame Cardiac of the curious read of entering her house at night, which had pursued her for the ast two months that she had been alone in it, and which she had never oken of to anyone before. She went on to speak of the belief that e had seen Captain Fennel the previous night in the passage, and the dream which had visited her when at length she fell asleep.

Madame Cardiac turned her kindly, sensible face, and her quiet, rk, surprised eyes upon Lavinia. "I cannot understand you," she said. "You mean, I suppose, that you cannot understand the facts, ary. Neither can I. Why this fear of going into the house should upon me is most strange. I never was nervous before."

"I don't know that that is so very strange," dissented Mary rdiac, after a pause. "It must seem lonely to let oneself into a rk, empty house in the middle of the night; and your house is what may be called an isolated situation; I should not much like myself. That's nothing. What I cannot understand, Lavinia, is e fancy that you saw Captain Fennel."

"He appeared to be standing there, and was quite visible to me. The expression on his face, which seemed to be looking straight into mine, was most malicious. I never saw such an expression upon it in reality."

Mary Cardiac laughed a little, saying she had never been troubled with nervous fears herself; she was too practical for anything of the sort.

"And I have been practical hitherto," returned Lavinia. "When the first surprise of seeing him there, or fancying I saw him there, was over, I began to think, Mary, that he might be dead; that it was his apparition which had stood there looking at me."

Mary Cardiac shook her head. "Had anything of that kind happened, Nancy would have telegraphed to you. Rely upon it, Lavinia, it was pure fancy. You have been disagreeably exercised in mind lately, you know, about that man; hearing he was coming home, your brain was somewhat thrown off its balance."

"It may be so. The dream followed on it; and I did not like the dream."

"We all have bad dreams now and then. You say you do not remember much of this one."

"I think I did not know much of it when dreaming it," quaintly spoke Lavinia. "I was in a sea of trouble; throughout which I seemed to be striving to escape some evil menaced me by Captain Fennel, and could not do so. Whichever way I turned, there he was at a distance, scowling at me with a threatening, evil countenance. Mary," she added in impassioned tones, "I am sure some ill await me from that man."

"I am sure, were I you, I would put these foolish notions from me," calmly spoke Madame Cardiac. "If Nancy set up a vocation for seeing ghosts and dreaming dreams, one would not so much wonder at it. *You* have always been reasonable, Lavinia; be so now."

Miss Preen took out her watch and looked at it. "We may as well be walking towards the port, Mary," she remarked. "It is past two. The boat ought to be in sight."

Not only in sight was the steamer, but rapidly nearing the port. She had made a calm and quick passage. When at length she was in and about to swing round, and the two ladies were looking down at it, with a small crowd of other assembled spectators, the first passengers they saw on board were Nancy and Captain Fennel, who began to wave their hands in greeting and to nod their heads.

"Anyway, Lavinia, it could not have been his ghost last night," whispered Mary Cardiac.

Far from presenting an evil countenance to Lavinia, as the days passed on, Captain Fennel appeared to wish to please her, and was all suavity. So at present nothing disturbed the peace of the petite Maison Rouge.

"What people were they that you stayed with in London, Nancy?" Lavinia inquired of her sister on the first favourable opportunity.

Nancy glanced round the salon before answering, as if to make sure they were alone; but Captain Fennel had gone out for a stroll.

"We were at James Fennel's, Lavinia."

"What—the brother's! And has he a wife?"

"Yes; a wife, but no children. Mrs. James Fennel has money of her own, which she receives weekly."

"Receives weekly!" echoed Lavinia.

"She owns some little houses which are let out in weekly tenements; an agent collects the rents, and brings her the money every Tuesday morning. She dresses in the shabbiest things sometimes, and does her own housework, and altogether is not what I should call quite a lady, but she is very good-hearted. She did her best to make us comfortable, and never grumbled at our staying so long. I expect Edwin paid her something. James only came home by fits and starts. I think he was in some embarrassment—debt, you know. He used to dash into the house like a whirlwind when he did come, and steal out of it when he left, peering about on all sides."

"Have they a nice house?" asked Lavinia.

"Oh, good gracious, no! It's not a house at all, only small lodgings. And Mrs. James changed them twice over whilst we were there. When we first went they were at a place called Ball's Pond."

"Why did you stay all that time?"

Mrs. Edwin Fennel shook her head helplessly; she could not answer the question. "I should have liked to come back before," she said; "it was very wearisome, knowing nobody and having nothing to do. Did you find it dull here, Lavinia, all by yourself?"

"'Dull' is not the right word for it," answered Lavinia, catching her breath with a sigh. "I felt more lonely, Ann, than I shall ever care to feel again. Especially when I had to come home at night from some soirée, or from spending the evening quietly with Mary Cardiac or any other friend." And she went on to tell of the feeling of terror which had so tried her.

"I never heard of such a thing!" exclaimed Ann. "How silly you must be, Lavinia! What could there have been in the house to frighten you?"

"I don't know; I wish I did know," sighed Lavinia, just as she had said more than once before.

Nancy, who was attired in a bright ruby cashmere robe, with a gold chain and locket, some blue ribbons adorning her light ringlets, for she had made a point of dressing more youthfully than ever since her marriage, leaned back in her chair, as she sat staring at her sister and thinking.

"Lavinia," she said huskily, "you remember the feeling you

had the day we were about to look at the house with Mary Cardiac, and which you thought was through the darkness of the passage striking you unpleasantly? Well, my opinion is that it must have given you a scare."

"Why, of course it did."

"Ah, but I mean a scare which lasts," said Ann; "one of those scares which affect the mind and take very long to get rid of. You recollect poor Mrs. Hunt, at Buttermead. She was frightened at a violent thunderstorm, though she never had been before; and for years afterwards, whenever it thundered, she became so alarmingly ill and agitated that Mr. Featherston had to be run for. He called it a scare. I think the fear you felt that past day must have left that sort of scare upon you. How else can you account for what you tell me?"

Truth to say, the same idea had more than once struck Lavinia. She knew how devoid of reason some of these "scares" are, and yet how terribly they disturb the mind on which they fasten.

"But I had quite forgotten that fear, Ann," she urged in reply. "We had lived in the house eighteen months when you went away, and I had never recalled it."

"All the same, I think you received the scare; it had only lain dormant," persisted Ann.

"Well, well; you are back again now and it is over," said Lavinia. "Let us forget it. Do not speak of it again at all to anyone, Nancy love."

II.

WINTER that year had quite set in when Sainteville found itself honoured with rather a remarkable visitor; one Signor Talcke, who descended, one morning at the beginning of December, at the Hôtel des Princes. Though he called himself "Signor," it seemed uncertain to what country he owed his birth. He spoke five or six languages as a native, including Hindustani. Signor Talcke was a professor of occult sciences; he was a great astronomer; astrology he had at his fingers' ends. He was a powerful mesmerist; he would foretell the events of your life by your hands, or your fortune by the cards.

For a fee of twenty-five francs, he would attend an evening party, and exhibit some of his powers. Amidst others who engaged him were the Miss Bosanquets, in the Rue Lamartine. A relative of theirs, Sir George Bosanquet, K.C.B., had come over with his wife, to spend Christmas with them. Sir George laughed at what he heard of Signor Talcke's powers of reading the future, and said he should much like to witness a specimen of it. So Miss Bosanquet and her sisters hastily arranged an evening entertainment, engaged the mystical man, and invited their friends and acquaintances, those of the little Maison Rouge included.

It took place on the Friday after Christmas Day. Something that occurred during the evening was rather remarkable. Miss Preen's diary gives a full account of it, and that shall be transcribed here. And I, Johnny Ludlow, take this opportunity of assuring the reader that what she wrote was in faithful accordance with the facts of the case.

From Miss Preen's Diary.

Saturday morning.—I feel very tired; fit for nothing. Nancy has undertaken to do the marketing, and is gone out for that purpose with her husband. It is to be hoped she will be moderate, and not attempt to buy up half the market.

I lay awake all night, after the evening at Miss Bosanquet's, thinking how foolish Ann was to have had her "future cast," as that Italian (if he is Italian) called it, and how worse than foolish I was to let what he said worry me. "As if there could be anything in it!" laughed Ann, as we were coming home; fortunately she is not as I am in temperament—nervously anxious. "It is only nonsense," said Miss Anna Bosanquet to me when the Signor's predictions were at an end; "he will tell someone else just the same next time." But *I* did not think so. Of course one is at a loss how to trust this kind of man. Take him for all in all, I rather like him; and he appears to believe implicitly in what he says: or, rather, in what he tells us the cards say.

They are charming women, these three sisters—Grace, Rose and Anna Bosanquet; good, considerate, high-bred ladies. I wonder how it is they have lived to middle life without any one of them marrying? And I often wonder how they came to take up their residence at Sainteville, for they are very well off, and have great connections. I remember, though, Anna once said to me that the dry, pure air of the place suited her sister Rose, who has bad health, better than any other they had tried.

When seven o'clock struck, the hour named, Nancy and I appeared together in the sitting-room, ready to start, for we observe punctuality at Sainteville. I wore my black satin, handsome yet, trimmed with the rich white lace that Mrs. Selby gave me. Nancy looked very nice and young in her lilac silk. She wore a white rose in her hair, and her gold chain and locket round her neck. Captain Fennel surprised us by saying he was not going—his neuralgia had come on. I fancied it was an excuse—that he did not wish to meet Sir George Bosanquet. He had complained of the same thing on Christmas Day, so it might be true. Ann and I set off together, leaving him nursing his cheek at the table.

It was a large gathering for Sainteville—forty guests, I should think; but the rooms are large. Professor Talcke exhibited some wonderful feats in—what shall I call it?—necromancy?—as good a word, perhaps, as any other. He mesmerised some people, and put one of them into a state of clairvoyance, and her revelations took my

breath away. Signor Talcke assured us that what she said would be found minutely true. I think he has the strangest eyes I ever saw: grey eyes, with a sort of light in their depths. His features are fair and delicate, his voice is gentle as a woman's, his manner retiring; Sir George seemed much taken with him.

Later, when the evening was passing, he asked if anyone present would like to have their future cast, for he had cards which would do it. Three of his listeners pressed forward at once; two of them with gay laughter, the other pale and awestruck. The Signor went into the recess in the small room, and sat down behind the little table there, and as many as could crowd round to look on, did so. I don't know what passed; there was no room for me; or whether the "Futures" he disclosed were good or bad. I had sat on the sofa at a distance, talking with Anna Bosanquet and Madame Cardiac.

Suddenly, as we were for a moment silent, Ann's voice was heard, eager and laughing:

"Will you tell my fortune, Signor Talcke? I should like to have mine revealed."

"With pleasure, madame," he answered.

We got up and drew near. I felt vexed that Ann should put herself forward in any such matter, and whispered to her; but she only shook her curls, laughed at me, and persisted. Signor Talcke put the cards in her hands, telling her to shuffle them.

"It is all fun, Lavinia," she whispered to me. "Did you hear him tell Miss Peet she was going to have money left her?"

After Ann had shuffled the cards, he made her cut them into three divisions, and he then turned them up on the table himself, faces upwards, and laid them out in three rows. They were not like the cards we play with; quite different from those; nearly all were picture-cards, and the plain ones bore cabalistic characters. We stood looking on with two or three other people; the rest had dispersed, and had gone into the next room to listen to the singing.

At first Signor Talcke never spoke a word. He looked at the cards, and looked at Nancy; looked, and looked again. "They are not propitious," he said in low tones, and picked them up, and asked Nancy to shuffle and cut them again. Then he laid them out as before, and we stood waiting in silence.

Chancing at that moment to look at Signor Talcke, his face startled me. He was frowning at the cards in so painful a manner as to quite alter its expression. But he did not speak. He still only gazed at the cards with bent eyes, and glanced up at Ann occasionally. Then, with an impatient sweep of the hand, he pushed the cards together.

"I must trouble you to shuffle and cut them once more, madame," he said. "Shuffle them well."

"Are they still unpropitious?" asked a jesting voice at my elbow. Turning, I saw Charley Palliser's smiling face. He must have been standing there, and heard Signor Talcke's previous remark.

"Yes, sir, they are," replied the Signor, with marked emphasis. "I never saw the cards so unpropitious in my life."

Nancy took up the cards, shuffled them well, and cut them three times. Signor Talcke laid them out as before, bent his head, and looked attentively at them. He did not speak, but there was no mistaking the vexed, pained and puzzled look on his face.

I do not think he knew Nancy, even by name. I do not think he knew me, or had the least notion that we were related. Neither of us had ever met him before. He put his hand to his brow, still gazing at the cards.

"But when are you going to begin my fortune, sir?" broke in Nancy.

"I would rather not tell it at all, madame," he answered.

"*Cannot* you tell it?—have your powers of forecasting inconveniently run away?" said she incautiously, her tone mocking in her disappointment.

"I could tell it, all too surely; but you might not like to hear it," returned he.

"Our magician has lost his divining rod just when he needed it," observed a gentleman with a grey beard, a stranger to me, who was standing opposite, speaking in a tone of ill-natured satire; and a laugh went round.

"It is not that," said the Signor, keeping his temper perfectly. "I could tell what the cards say, all too certainly; but it would not give satisfaction."

"Oh, yes, it would," said Nancy. "I should like to hear it, every bit of it. Please do begin."

"The cards are dark; very dark indeed," he said; "I don't remember ever to have seen them like it. Each time they have been turned, the darkness has increased. *Nothing* can show worse than they do now."

"Never mind that," gaily returned Ann. "You undertook to tell my fortune, sir; and you ought not to make excuses in the middle of it. Let the cards be as dark as night, we must hear what they say."

He drew in his thin lips for a moment, and then spoke, his tone quiet, calm, unemotional.

"Some great evil threatens you," he began; "you seem to be living in the midst of it. It is not only you that it threatens; there is another also——"

"Oh, my goodness," interrupted Nancy, in her childish way. "I hope it does not threaten Edwin! What *is* the evil? Sickness?"

"Worse than that. It—it——" Signor Talcke's attention was so absorbed by the aspect of the cards, that, as it struck me, he appeared hardly to heed what he was saying. He had a long, thin, black pencil in his long, thin fingers, and kept pointing to different cards as if in accordance with his thoughts, but not touching them.

"There is some peculiar form of terror here," he went on. "I cannot make it out; it is very unusual. It does not come close to you; not yet, at any rate; and it seems to surround you. It seems to be in the house. May I ask"—quickly lifting his eyes to Ann—"whether you are given to superstitious fears?"

"Do you mean ghosts?" cried Ann, and Charley Palliser burst out laughing. "Not at all, sir; I don't believe in ghosts. I'm sure there are none in our house."

Remembering my own terror in regard to the house, and the nervous fancy of having seen Captain Fennel in it when he was miles away, a curious impression came over me that he must surely be reading my fortune as well as Nancy's. But I was not prepared for her next words. Truly she has no more reticence than a child.

"My sister has a feeling that the house is lonely. She shivers when she has to go into it after nightfall."

Signor Talcke let his hands fall on the table, and lifted his face. Apparently, he was digesting this revelation. I do not think he knew the "sister" was present. For my part, disliking publicity, I slipped behind Anna Bosanquet, and stood by Charley Palliser.

"Shivers?" repeated the Italian.

"Shivers and trembles, and turns sick at having to go in," affirmed Nancy. "So she told me when I arrived home from England."

"If a feeling of that sort assailed me, I should never go into the house again," said the Signor.

"But how could you help it, if it were your home?" she argued.

"All the same. I should regard that feeling as a warning against the house, and never enter it. Then you are not yourself troubled with superstitious fears?" he broke off, returning to the business in hand, and looking at the cards. "Well—at present—it does not seem to touch you, this curious terror which is assuredly in the house——"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Ann. "Why do you say 'at present?' Is it to touch me later?"

"I cannot say. Each time that the cards have been spread it has shown itself nearer to you. It is not yet very near. Apart from that terror—or perhaps remotely connected with it—I see evil threatening you. Great evil."

"Is it in the house?"

"Yes; hovering about it. It is not only yourself it seems to threaten. There is someone else. And it is nearer to that person than it is to you."

"But who is that person? Man or woman?"

"It is a woman. See this ugly card," continued he, pointing with his pencil; "it will not be got rid of, shuffle as you will; it has come nearer to that woman each time."

The card he pointed to was more curious looking than any other in the pack. It was not unlike the nine of spades, but crowded with

devices. The gentleman opposite, whom I did not know, leaned forward and touched the card with the tip of his forefinger.

"Le cercueil, n'est-ce-pas?" said he.

"My!" whispered an English lad's voice behind me. "Cercueil? that means coffin."

"How did you know?" asked Signor Talcke of the grey-bearded man.

"I was at the Sous-Préfect's soirée on Sunday evening when you were exhibiting. I heard you tell him in French that that was the ugliest card in the pack: indicating death."

"Well, it is not this lady the card is pursuing," said the Signor smiling at Ann to reassure her. "Not yet awhile, at least. And we must all be pursued by it in our turn, whenever that shall come," he added, bending over the cards again. "Pardon me, madame—may I ask whether there has not been some unpleasantness in the house concerning money?"

Nancy's face turned red. "Not—exactly," she answered with hesitation. "We are like a great many more people—not as rich as we should wish to be."

"It does not appear to lie precisely in the want of money: but certainly money is in some way connected with the evil," he was beginning to say, his eyes fixed dreamily on the cards, when Ann interrupted him.

"That is too strong a word—evil. Why do you use it?"

"I use it because the evil is there. No lighter word would be appropriate. There is some evil element pervading your house, very grave and formidable; it is most threatening; likely to go on to—to—darkness. I mean that it looks as if there would be some great break-up," he corrected swiftly, as if to soften the other word.

"That the house would be broken up?" questioned Ann.

He stole a glance at her. "Something of that sort," he said carelessly.

"Do you mean that the evil comes from an enemy?" she went on.

"Assuredly."

"But we have no enemy. I'm sure we have not one in all the world."

He slightly shook his head. "You may not suspect it yet, though I should have said"—waving the pencil thoughtfully over some of the cards—"that he was already suspected—doubted."

Nancy took up the personal pronoun briskly. "He!—then the evil enemy must be a man? I assure you we do not know any man likely to be our enemy or to wish us harm. No, nor woman either. Perhaps your cards don't tell true to-night, Signor Talcke?"

"Perhaps not, madame; we will let it be so if you will," he quietly said, and shuffled all the cards together.

That ended the séance. As if determined not to tell any more

fortunes, the Signor hurriedly put up the cards and disappeared from the recess. Nancy did not appear to be in the least impressed.

"What a curious 'future' it was!" she exclaimed lightly to Mary Cardiac. "I might as well not have had it cast. He told me nothing."

They walked away together. I went back to the sofa and Anna Bosanquet followed me.

"Mrs. Fennel calls it 'curious,'" I said to her. "I call it more than that—strange; ominous. I wish I had not heard it."

"Dear Miss Preen, it is only nonsense," she answered. "He will tell someone else the same next time." But she only so spoke to console me.

A wild wish flashed into my mind—that I should ask the man to tell *my* future. But had I not heard enough? Mine was blended with this of Ann's. *I* was the other woman whom the dark fate was more relentlessly pursuing. There could be no doubt of that. There could be as little doubt that it was I who already suspected the author of the "evil." What can the "dark fate" be that we are threatened with? Debt? Will his debts spring upon us and break up our home, and turn us out of it? Or will it be something worse? That card which followed me meant a coffin, they said. Ah me! Perhaps I am foolish to dwell upon such ideas. Certainly they are more fitting for the world's dark ages than for this enlightened nineteenth century of it.

Charley Palliser gallantly offered to see us home. I said no; as if we were not old enough to go by ourselves; but he would come with us. As we went along Ann began talking of the party, criticising the dresses, and so on. Charley seemed to be unusually silent.

"Was not mine a grand fortune?" she presently said, with a laugh, as we crossed the Place Ronde.

"Stunning," said he.

"As if there could be anything in it, you know! Does the man think we believe him, I wonder?"

"Oh, these conjurers like to fancy they impose on us," remarked Charley, shaking hands as we halted before the house of Mme Sauvage.

And I have had a wretched night, for somehow the thing has frightened me. I never was superstitious; never; and I'm sure I never believed in conjurers, as Charles had it. If I should come across Signor Talcke again while he stays here, I would ask him—— Here comes Nancy! and Flore behind her with the marketings. I'll put up my diary.

"I've bought such a lovely capon," began Nancy, as Lavinia went into the kitchen. "Show it to Madame, Flore."

It was one that even Lavinia could praise; they both understood poultry. "It really is a beauty," said Lavinia. "And did you remember the salsifis? And, Ann, where have you left your husband?

"Oh, we met old Mr. Griffin, and Edwin has gone up to Drecques with him. My opinion is, Lavinia, that that poor old Griffin dare not go about far by himself since his attack. He had to see his landlord at Drecques to-day, and he asked Edwin to accompany him. They went by the eleven o'clock train."

Lavinia felt it a relief. Even that little absence, part of a day, she felt thankful for, so much had she grown to dislike the presence in the house of Edwin Fennel.

"Did you tell your husband about your 'Fortune,' Nancy?"

"No: I was too sleepy last night to talk, and I was late in getting up this morning. I'm not sure that I shall tell him," added Mrs. Fennel thoughtfully: "he might be angry with me for having had it done."

"That is more than likely," replied Lavinia.

Late in the afternoon, as they were sitting together in the salon, they saw the postman come marching up the yard. He brought two letters—one for Miss Preen, the other for her sister.

"It is the remittance from William Selby," said Lavinia as she opened hers. "He has sent it a day or two earlier than usual; it is not really due until Monday or Tuesday."

Seventeen pounds ten shillings each. Nancy, in a hasty sort of manner, put her cheque into the hands of Lavinia, almost as if she feared it would burn her own fingers. "You had better take it from me whilst you can," she said in low tones.

"Yes; for I must have it, Ann," was the answer. "We are in debt—as you may readily conceive—with only half the usual amount to spend last quarter."

"It was not my fault; I was very sorry," said Ann humbly: and she rose hastily to go to the kitchen, saying she was thirsty, and wanted a glass of water. But Lavinia thought she went to avoid being questioned.

Lavinia carried the two cheques to her room and locked them up. After their five o'clock dinner, each sister wrote a note to Colonel Selby, enclosing her receipt. Flore took them out to post when she left. The evening passed on. Lavinia worked; Nancy nodded over the fire: she was very sleepy, and went to bed early.

It was past eleven o'clock when Captain Fennel came in, a little the worse for something or other. After returning from Drecques by the last train, he had gone home with Mr. Griffin to supper. He told Lavinia, in words running into one another, that the jolting train had made him giddy. Of course she believed as much of that as she liked, but did not contradict it. He went to the cupboard in the recess, unlocked it to get out the cognac, and then sat down with his pipe by the embers of the dying fire. Lavinia, unasked, brought in a decanter of water, put it on the table with a glass, and wished him good-night.

All next day Captain Fennel lay in bed; he had a racking

headache. His wife carried up a choice bit of the capon when they were dining after morning service, but he could not so much as look at it. Being a fairly cautious man as a rule, he had to pay for—for the jolting of the train.

He was better on Monday morning, but not well, still shaky, and did not come down to breakfast. It was bitterly cold—a sort of black frost; but Lavinia, wrapping herself up warmly, went out as soon as breakfast was over.

Her first errand was to the bank, where she paid in the cheques and received French money for them. Then she visited sundry shops; the butcher's, the grocer's, and others, settling the accounts due. Last of all, she made a call upon Madame Veuve Sauvage, and paid the rent for the past quarter. All this left her with exactly nineteen pounds, which was all the money she had to go on with for every purpose until the end of March—three whole months.

Lunch was ready when she returned. Taking off her things upstairs and locking up her cash, she went down to it. Flore had made some delicious soupe maigre. Only those who have tried it know how good it is on a sharp winter's day. Captain Fennel seemed to relish it much, though his appetite had not quite come back to him, and he turned from the dish of scrambled eggs which supplemented the soup. In the evening they went, by appointment, to dine at Madame Cardiac's, the other guests being Monsieur Henri Dupuis with his recently-married wife, and Charles Palliser.

After dinner, over the coffee, M. Henri Dupuis suddenly spoke of the soirée at Miss Bosanquet's the previous Friday, regretting that he and his wife had been unable to attend it. He was engaged the whole evening with a patient dangerously ill, and his wife did not like to appear at it without him. Nancy—Nancy!—then began to tell about the "Fortune" which had been forecast for her by Signor Talcke, thinking possibly that her husband could not reproach her for it before company. She was very gay over it; a proof that it had left no bad impression on her mind.

"What's that, Nancy?" cried Captain Fennel, who had listened as if he disbelieved his ears. "The fellow told you we had something evil in our house?"

"Yes, he did," assented Nancy. "An evil influence, he said, which was destined to bring forth something dark and dreadful."

"I am sorry you did not tell this before," returned the Captain stiffly. "I should have requested you not again to allude to such folly. It was downright insolence."

"I—you—you were out on Saturday, you know, Edwin, and in bed with your headache all Sunday; and to-day I forgot it," said Nancy in less brave tones.

"Suppose we have a game at wholesome card playing," interpose Mary Cardiac, bringing forth a new pack. "Open them, will you Jules? Do you remember, mon ami, having your fortune told onc

by a gipsy woman when we were in Sir John Witney's coppice with the two Peckham girls? She told you you would fall into a rich inheritance and marry a Frenchwoman."

"Neither of which agreeable promises is yet fulfilled," said little M. Cardiac with his happy smile. M. Cardiac had heard the account of Nancy's "forecast" from his wife; he was not himself present, but taking a hand at whist in the card-room.

They sat down to a round game—Spin. M. Henri Dupuis and his pretty young wife had never played it before, but they soon learned it and liked it much. Both of them spoke English well; she with the prettiest accent imaginable. Thus the evening passed, and no more allusion was made to the fortune-telling at Miss Bosanquet's.

That was Monday. On Tuesday, Miss Preen was dispensing the coffee at breakfast in the little Maison Rouge to her sister and Mr. Fennel, when Flore came bustling in with a letter in her hand.

"Tenez, madame," she said, putting it beside Mrs. Fennel. "I laid it down in the kitchen when the facteur brought it, whilst I was preparing the déjeuner, and forgot it afterwards."

Before Nancy could touch the letter, her husband caught it up. He gazed at the address, at the postmark, and turned it about to look at the seal. The letters of gentlefolk were generally fastened with a seal in those days: this had one in transparent bronze wax.

Mr. Fennel put the letter down with a remark peevishly uttered. "It is not from London: it is from Buttermead."

"And from your old friend, Jane Peckham, Nancy," struck in Lavinia. "I recognise her handwriting."

"I *am* glad," exclaimed Nancy; "I have not heard from them for ages. Why now—is it not odd?—that M. Cardiac should mention the Peckhams last night and I receive a letter from them this morning?"

"I supposed it might be from London, with your remittance," said Mr. Fennel to his wife. "It is due, is it not?"

"Oh, that came on Saturday, Edwin," she said, as she opened her letter.

"Came on Saturday!" echoed Captain Fennel, ungraciously, as if disputing the assertion.

"By the afternoon post. You were at Drecques, you know."

"The *money* came? *Your* money?"

"Yes," said Nancy, who had stepped to the window to read her letter, for it was a dark day, and stood there with her back to the room.

"And where is it?" demanded he.

"I gave it to Lavinia. I always give it to her."

Captain Fennel glared at his wife for a moment, then smoothed his face to its ordinary placidity, and turned to Lavinia.

"Will you be good enough to hand over to me my wife's money, Miss Preen?"

"No," she answered quietly.

"I must trouble you to do so, when breakfast shall be finished.

"I cannot," pursued Lavinia. "I have paid it away."

"That I do not believe. I claim it from you in right of my wife; and I shall enforce the claim."

"The money is Nancy's, not yours," said Lavinia. "In consequence of your having stopped her share last quarter in London, I was plunged here into debt and great inconvenience. Yesterday morning I went out to settle the debts—and it has taken the whole of her money to do it. That is the state of things, Captain Fennel."

"I am in debt here myself," retorted he, but not angrily. "I owe money to my tailor and bootmaker; I owe an account at the chemist's; I want money in my pockets—and I must, indeed, have it."

"Not from me," returned Lavinia.

Edwin Fennel broke into a little access of temper. He dashed his serviette on the table, strode to the window, and roughly caught his wife by the arm. She cried out.

"How dared you hand your money to anyone but me?" he asked in a low voice of passion.

"But how are we to live if I don't give it to Lavinia for the housekeeping?" returned Nancy, bursting into tears. "It takes all we have; her share and mine; every farthing of it."

"Let my sister alone, Mr. Fennel," spoke up Lavinia with authority. "She is responsible for the debts we contract in this house just as much as I am, and she must contribute her part to pay them. You ought to be aware that the expenses are now increased by nearly a third; I assure you I hardly like to face the difficulties I see before me."

"Do you suppose I can stop in the place without some loose cash to keep me going?" he asked calmly. "Is that reasonable, Miss Lavinia?"

"And do you suppose I can keep you and Ann here without her money to help me to do it?" she rejoined. "Perhaps the better plan will be for me to take up my abode elsewhere, and leave the house to you and Ann to do as you please in it."

Captain Fennel dropped his argument, returned to the table and went on with his breakfast. The last words had startled him. Without Lavinia, which meant without her money, they could not live in the house at all.

Matters were partly patched up in the course of the day. Nancy came upstairs to Lavinia, begging and praying, as if she were praying for her life, for a little ready money for her husband—just a hundred francs. Trembling and sobbing, she confessed that she dared not return to him without it; she should be too frightened at his anger.

And Lavinia gave it to her.

III.

MATTERS went on to the spring. There were no outward differences in the petite Maison Rouge, but it was full of an under-current of discomfort. At least, for Lavinia. Captain Fennel was simply to her an incubus; and now and again petty accounts of his would be brought to the door by tradespeople, who wanted them settled. As to keeping up the legitimate payments, she could not do it.

March was drawing to an end, when a surprise came to them. Lavinia received a letter from Paris, written by Colonel Selby. He had been there for two days on business, he said, and purposed returning viâ Sainteville, to take a passing glimpse at herself and her sister. He hoped to be down that afternoon by the three o'clock train, and he asked them to meet him at the Hôtel des Princes afterwards, and to stay to dine with him. He proposed crossing to London by the night boat.

Lavinia read the letter aloud. Nancy went into ecstasies, for a wonder; she had been curiously subdued in manner lately. Edwin Fennel made no remark, but his pale face wore a look of thought.

During the morning he betook himself to the Rue Lothaire to call upon Mr. Griffin; and he persuaded that easy-natured old gentleman to take advantage of the sunny day, and make an excursion en voiture to the nearest town, a place called Pontipette. Of course the Captain went also, as his companion.

Colonel Selby arrived at three. Lavinia and Nancy met him at the station, and went with him in the omnibus to the hotel. They then showed him about Sainteville, to which he was a stranger, took him to see their domicile, the little red house (which he did not seem to admire), and from thence to Madame Cardiac's. In the Buttermead days, the Colonel and Mary Featherston had been great friends. He invited her and her husband to join them at the table d'hôte dinner at five o'clock.

Lavinia and Nancy went home again to change their dresses for it. Nancy put on a pretty light green silk, which had been recently modernised. Mrs. Selby had kept up an extensive wardrobe, and had left it between the two sisters.

"You should wear your gold chain and locket," remarked Lavinia, who always took pride in her sister's appearance. "It will look very nice upon that dress."

She alluded to a short, thick chain of gold, the gold locket attached to it being set round with pearls, Nancy's best ornament; nay, the only one she had of any value; it was the one she had worn at Miss Bosanquet's celebrated party. Nancy made no answer. She was turning red and white.

"What's the matter?" cried Lavinia.

The matter was, that Mr. Edwin Fennel had obtained possession

of the chain and locket more than a month ago. Silly Nancy confessed with trembling lips that she feared he had pledged it.

Or sold it, thought Lavinia. She felt terribly vexed and indignant. "I suppose, Ann, it will end in his grasping everything," she said, "and starving us out of house and home: *myself*, at any rate."

"He expects money from his brother James, and then he will get it back for me," twittered Nancy.

M. Jules Cardiac was not able to come to the table d'hôte; his duties that night would detain him at the college until seven o'clock. It happened so on occasion. Colonel Selby sat at one end of their party, Lavinia at the other; Mary Cardiac and Nancy between them. A gentleman was on the other side of Lavinia whom she did not particularly notice; and, upon his asking the waiter for something, his voice seemed to strike upon her memory. Turning, she saw it was the tall Englishman they had seen on the pier some months before in the shepherd's plaid, the lawyer named Lockett. He recognised her face at the same moment, and they entered into conversation.

"Are you making any stay at Sainteville?" she inquired.

"For a few days. I must be back in London on Monday morning."

Colonel Selby's attention was attracted to the speakers. "What, is it you, Lockett?" he exclaimed.

Mr. Lockett bent forward to look beyond Lavinia and Madame Cardiac. "Why, Colonel, are you here?" he cried. So it was evident that they knew one another.

But you can't talk very much across people at a table d'hôte; and Lavinia and Mr. Lockett were, so to say, left together again. She put a question to him, dropping her voice to a whisper.

"Did you ever find that person you were looking for?"

"The person I was looking for?" repeated the lawyer, not remembering. "What person was that?"

"The one you spoke of on the pier that day—a Mr. Dangerfield."

"Oh, ay; but I was not looking for him myself. No, I believe he is not dropped upon yet. He is keeping quiet, I expect."

"Is he still being looked for?"

"Little doubt of that. My friend here, on my left, could tell you more about him than I can, if you want to know."

"No, thank you," said Lavinia hastily, in a sort of fear. And she then observed that next to Mr. Lockett another Englishman was sitting, who looked very much like a lawyer also.

After dinner Colonel Selby took his guests, the three ladies, into the little salon, which opened to Madame Podevin's bureau, for it was she who, French fashion, kept the bureau and all its accounts, not her husband. Whilst the coffee, which the Colonel ordered, was preparing, he took from his pocket-book two cheques, and gave one each to Lavinia and Mrs. Fennel. It was their quarterly income, due about a week hence.

"I thought I might as well give it you now, as I am here, and save the trouble of sending," he remarked. "You can write me a receipt for it; here's pen, ink and paper."

Each wrote her receipt, and gave it him. Nancy held the cheque in her hand, looking at her sister in a vacillating manner. "I suppose I ought to give it you, Lavinia," she said. "Must I do so?"

"What do you think about it yourself?" coldly rejoined Lavinia.

"He was so very angry with me the last time," sighed Nancy, still withholding the cheque. "He said I ought to keep possession of my own, and he ordered me to do so in future."

"That he may have the pleasure of spending it," said Mary Cardiac in a sharp tone, though she laughed at the same time. "Lavinia has to pay for the bread and cheese that you and he eat, Nancy; how can she do that unless she receives your money?"

"Yes, I know; it is very difficult," said poor Nancy. "Take the cheque, Lavinia; I shall tell him that you and Mary Cardiac both said I must give it up."

"Oh, tell him I said so, and welcome," spoke Madame Cardiac. "I will tell him so myself, if you like."

As Colonel Selby returned to the room—he had been seeing to his luggage—the coffee was brought in, and close upon it came Monsieur Cardiac.

The boat for London was leaving early that night; eight o'clock; they all went down to it to see William Selby off. It was a calm night, warm for the time of year, the moon beautifully bright. After the boat's departure Lavinia and Ann went home, and found Captain Fennel there. He had just got in, he said, and wanted some supper.

Whilst he was taking it, his wife told him of Mr. Lockett's having sat by them at the table d'hôte, and that he and Colonel Selby were acquainted with one another. Captain Fennel drew a grim face at the information, and asked whether the lawyer had also "cleared out" for London.

"I don't think so; I did not see him go on board," said Nancy. "Lavinia knows; she was talking with Mr. Lockett all dinner-time."

Captain Fennel turned his impassive face to Lavinia, as if demanding an answer to his question.

"Mr. Lockett intends to remain here until Sunday, I fancy; he said he had to be in London on Monday morning. He has some friend with him here. I inquired whether they had found the Mr. Hungerfield he spoke of last autumn," added Lavinia slowly and distinctly. "'Not yet,' he answered, 'but he is still being looked for.'"

Whether Lavinia said this with a little spice of malice, or whether she really meant to warn him, she best knew. Captain Fennel finished his supper in silence.

"I presume the Colonel did not hand you over your quarter's

money?" he next said to his wife in a mocking sort of way. "It is not due for a week yet; he is not one to pay beforehand."

Upon which Nancy began to tremble and looked imploringly at her sister, who was putting the plates together upon the tray. After Flore went home they had to wait upon themselves.

"Colonel Selby did hand us the money," said Lavinia. "I hold both the cheques for it."

Well, there ensued a mild disturbance; what schoolboys might call a genteel row. Mr. Edwin Fennel insisted upon his wife's cheque being given to him. Lavinia decisively refused. She went into a bit of a temper, and told him some home truths. He said he had a right to hold his wife's money, and should appeal to the law on the morrow to enforce it. He might do that, Lavinia retorted; no French law would make her give it up. Nancy began to cry.

Probably he knew his threats were futile. Instead of appealing to the law on the morrow, he went off by an early train, carrying Nancy with him. Lavinia's private opinion was that he thought it safer to take her, though it did increase the expense, than to leave her; she might get talking with Mr. Lockett. Ann's eyes were red, as if she had spent the night in crying.

"Has he *beaten* you?" Lavinia inquired, snatching the opportunity of a private moment.

"Oh, Lavinia, don't, don't! I shall *never* dare to let you have the cheque again," she wailed.

"Where is it that you are going?"

"He has not told me," Nancy whispered back again. "To Calais, I think, or else up to Lille. We are to be away all the week."

"Until Mr. Lockett and his friend are gone," thought Lavinia. "Nancy, how can he find money for it?"

"He has some Napoleons in his pocket—borrowed yesterday, I think, from old Griffin."

Lavinia understood. Old Griffin, as Nancy styled him, had been careless of his money since his very slight attack of paralysis; he would freely lend to anyone who asked him. She had not the slightest doubt that Captain Fennel had borrowed of him—and not for the first time.

It was on Wednesday morning that they went away, and for the rest of the week Lavinia was at peace. She changed the cheque at the bank as before, and paid the outstanding debts. But it left her so little to go on with, that she really knew not how she should get through the months until midsummer.

On Friday two of the Miss Bosanquets called. Hearing she was alone they came to ask her to dine with them in the evening. Lavinia did so. But upon returning home at night, the old horror of going into the house came on again. Lavinia was in despair she had hoped it had passed away for good.

On Saturday morning at market she met Madame Cardiac, who

nvited her for the following day, Sunday. Lavinia hesitated. Glad enough, indeed, she was at the prospect of being taken out of her solitary home for a happy day at Mary Cardiac's; but she shrank from again risking the dreadful feeling, which would be sure to attack her, when going into the house at night.

"You must come, Lavinia," cheerily urged Madame Cardiac. "I have invited the English teacher at Madame Deauville's school; she has no friends here, poor thing."

"Well, I will come, Mary; thank you," said Lavinia slowly.

"To be sure you will. Why do you hesitate at all?"

Lavinia could not say why in the midst of the jostling market-place; perhaps would not had they been alone. "For one thing, they may be coming home before to-morrow," observed Lavinia, alluding to Mr. and Mrs. Fennel.

"Let them come. You are not obliged to stay at home with them," laughed Mary.

From the Diary of Miss Preen.

Monday morning.—Well, it is over. The horror of last night is over, and I have not died of it. That will be considered a strong expression should any eye, save my own, see this diary; but I truly believe the horror would kill me if I were subjected many times more to it.

I went to Mary Cardiac's after our service was over in the morning, and we had a pleasant day there. The more I see of M. Jules, the more I esteem and respect him. He is so genuine, so good at heart, so simple in manner. Miss Perry is very agreeable; not so young as I had thought, thirty last birthday, she says. Her English is good, its accent refined, and that is not always the case with the English teachers who come over to France—the French ladies who engage them cannot judge of our accent.

Miss Perry and I left together a little before ten. She wished me good-night in the Rue de Tessin, Madame Deauville's house lying one way, mine another. The horror began to come over me as I crossed the Place Ronde, which had never happened before. Stay; not the horror itself, but the dread of it. An impulse actually crossed me to ring at Madame Sauvage's, and ask Mariette to accompany me up the entry and stand at my open door whilst I went in to light the candle. But I could see no light in the house, not even in Madame's salon, and supposed she and Mariette might be gone to bed. They are early people on Sundays; and the two young men have their latch-keys.

I will try to overcome it this time, I bravely said to myself; and not allow the fear to keep me halting outside the door as it has done before. So I took out my latch-key, put it straight into the door, opened it, went in, and closed it again. Before I had well reached the top of the passage and felt for the match-box on

the slab, I was in a paroxysm of horror. Something, like an icy wind coming up the passage, seemed to flutter the candle as I lighted it. Can I have left the door open, I thought; and turned to look. There stood Edwin Fennel. He stood just inside the door, which appeared to be shut, and he was looking straight at me with a threatening, malignant expression on his pale face.

"Oh! have you come home to-night?" I exclaimed aloud. For I really thought it was so.

The candle continued to flicker quickly as if it meant to go out, causing me to glance at it. When I looked up again Mr. Fennel was gone. *It was not himself who had been there; it was only an illusion.*

Exactly as he had seemed to appear to me the night before he and Nancy returned from London in December, so he had appeared again; his back to the door, and the evil menace on his countenance. Did the appearance come to me as a warning? Or was the thing nothing but a delusion of my own optic nerves?

I dragged my shaking limbs upstairs, on the verge of screaming at each step with the fear of what might be behind me, and undressed and went to bed. For nearly the whole night I could not sleep, and when I did get to sleep in the morning I was tormented by a distressing dream. All, all, as it had been that other night from three to four months ago.

A confused dream, no method in it. Several people were about, Nancy for one; I saw her fair curls. We all seemed to be in grievous discomfort and distress; while I, in worse fear than this world can know, was ever striving to hide myself from Edwin Fennel, to escape some dreadful fate which he held in store for me. And I knew I should not escape it.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

TRAPPING A PANTHER.

TWO years ago, I was ordered by my doctor to spend a winter at Algiers to recruit.

I was not allowed to do any work, and my wife used to overhaul all my correspondence, and look grumpy when I tried to kill time by writing a letter. I amused myself by taking long walks in the neighbourhood, or strolling about the streets of Algiers. I soon got tired of pottering about the "Kasbah" and panted for "fresh woods and pastures new" to explore. My curiosity had been excited by the glowing description of the scenery in Kabylia, the mountainous country that divides the two departments of Algiers and Constantine, and I determined to visit the country for a short time.

My arrangements were soon completed, and in a few days I was comfortably installed in the pleasant little "Hôtel des Voyageurs" at Medeah, a military station beautifully situated among the mountains. Here I resumed my walks and excursions, sketching a little, botanising a little, and smoking—well, a good deal, to make up for my enforced abstinence from tobacco while at Algiers.

One evening I returned to my hotel rather late after a prolonged stroll among the mountains, and found my friend the landlord, Monsieur Camille, in rather a disturbed frame of mind. It appeared that my long absence had made him anxious. He ventured a polite remonstrance at my going so far all alone.

"But what is there to be afraid of?" I said. "The natives are friendly enough."

"But yes," he replied, "the Kabyles are tranquil; but the 'bêtes sauvages,' they are 'méchants.'"

I said I had always heard that they would not attack a man unless provoked, and had been told, too, that they were only to be found far in the interior.

"Ah, monsieur, you mistake," he answered. "Figure to yourself that Monsieur le Juge de Paix shot two panthers last week within three miles of the town walls."

As I did not want to be saddled with a guide who would be always in the way, I pooh-poohed his notions of danger, but pacified him a little by showing him my revolver, which I always carried.

A few days afterwards I started early to visit a curious ruined village, which had for some time attracted me in the distance by its picturesque situation perched on the summit of a pine clad mountain, which I judged to be about six or seven miles off. This pine forest extended to within thirty or forty yards of the wall—for these hill villages are invariably surrounded by a wall as a defence against neighbouring tribes.

There was not much to see in the village, and I did not care to explore the deserted gourbis, as the native huts are called, knowing how thickly populated they are with the species of insect scientifically known as cimex vulgaris, not to speak of the less obnoxious species.

The mosque or kouba attracted me, however, and I determined to explore it. These koubas are to be found in most native villages in Algeria, and serve the double purpose of a place of worship, and a shrine of the holy man (Marabout) of the district. If you imagine a church tower, cut down to about twelve feet from the ground, with a domed roof surmounted by a small iron crescent, and the whole surface covered with a thick coating of whitewash, you have a good idea of what these buildings are like.

I wanted to see the interior, and found that the solid iron-bound door was merely fastened from the outside with a large bolt, which shot into the wall. The inside was not particularly interesting, and it was very musty. The shrine was opposite the door—a quaintly-carved wooden structure built over the tomb. Overhead there was a kind of wooden canopy, from which hung in a ghostly array the votive offerings of the faithful.

Having exhausted the village I began to think of getting back. I had climbed the wall and was sitting on the top idly enjoying the view, when I heard from the edge of the wood below a kind of rustling noise. Thinking it might be a jackal, I dislodged one of the large stones from the wall and half rolled half threw it towards the spot where I heard the noise.

My curiosity was soon satisfied.

There was a sound of branches breaking and out walked a panther, who gazed calmly around him as if taking stock of the surroundings. He evidently saw me, for he suddenly turned tail.

At first I confess I was horribly frightened; but when the animal turned and fled, a reaction set in, and I felt that my prey was escaping me; so I drew my revolver and fired. From a subsequent post mortem examination, it appeared that I had slightly wounded him in the near hind leg.

The animal, growling, faced round and made for me. I pride myself on my readiness of resource. The stories of travellers saving themselves by climbing a tree in similar circumstances flashed in a second through my mind. But where was the tree? Happy thought—the mosque! which was only a few yards distant. It would prove a real sanctuary to me. I silently blessed the marabout, and with all speed made for it. By means of the door, which I had left open, I scrambled to the roof, and pulled myself, by the help of the iron crescent, to the top of the dome, where I sat astraddle, awaiting the panther's pleasure.

Not a moment too soon—a sound of stones falling told me he was negotiating the wall. Immediately after, I heard him walking round

and round the kouba, emitting an occasional growl. For the present I was safe.

I could not see him at first from my exalted position; but he soon altered his tactics and crouched down a few paces off, where I had a good view of him. He lay like a cat, with his head between his paws, only raising it occasionally to emit a long-drawn growl. I began to feel seriously uneasy; the beast evidently intended to starve me out. I could not hold on all night. It was getting dark very rapidly. In this country, as you know, there is hardly any twilight. If I only had had my revolver—but I had dropped it in climbing the kouba.

Partly to give me courage, and partly from some vague notion that strange noises will frighten animals, I began to roar out—but with a quavering voice—snatches of songs. The only visible effect my musical efforts had on the panther was to make him wag his head slowly from side to side, as if beating time. It seemed that the brute was mocking me.

In a fit of impatience I unstrapped my field-glasses, and flung them full at his face, fetching him a crack on the snout. This roused the animal. Rearing up, he roared at me, as if in defiance, and made a dash at the mosque. His efforts to reach me were in vain.

All of a sudden he dashed through the open door into the mosque, perhaps hoping to get at me from the inside. Soon I heard a sound of smashing and splintering of wood. The animal was committing sacrilege apparently, and venting his rage on the holy man's shrine. If I could only keep you there, my friend, I thought, we would cry quits.

Keep him there, but how? A happy thought flashed across my mind. It was, indeed, an inspiration. "I have it," I exclaimed. I began to search my pockets, and found a couple of newspapers. I found also that I had a pocket-volume of Longfellow. With these materials—"to such base uses do we come at last"—I hastily improvised a sort of torch, binding it round with strips torn from my handkerchief. I then poured some of the contents of my brandy-flask over it, and fastened one end of this torch to the strap of my field-glass, and the other end of the strap to the iron crescent. I then lit the torch, and carefully let it down over the doorway.

There was a glorious illumination, which at once attracted the raging animal inside. I could hear him tearing from one side of the mosque to the other. Still the torch would only burn about a minute or so, and I must at once carry out my plan. It was a desperate one, but it was my only chance. I dropped softly to the ground, and shut the door in the panther's face; to his great discomfiture, as I found afterwards that the door in shutting had banged the torch in the brute's face and singed his whiskers.

There was more to be done yet, though, if I was to get clear away.

I knew that when the torch had burnt itself out the infuriated animal would make short work of the door. I confess my first idea was to have taken to my heels, but I reflected that the brute would probably overtake me before I could get over the village wall, and I thought that panthers, like cats, could see in the dark; besides, the brute would smell me. And then, what a glorious thing it would be to kill a full-grown panther with my own hand!

This I decided to do, and I hit on a scheme. I recovered my revolver, of which only one chamber had been fired, and cautiously stole to the little loophole in the side wall. I could see the animal crouched down among the débris of the shrine at the back of the mosque, gazing fixedly at the expiring torch, and angrily beating the ground with his tail. I took a deliberate aim at his eye and fired. The panther gave a tremendous spring in the air and fell heavily on its side, shot through the brain.

I reached the hotel about ten o'clock, and found Monsieur Camille weeping profusely: perhaps my bill being six days overdue had something to do with his emotion. He seemed overjoyed to see me. "Ciel—you have returned? A la bonne heure!" he exclaimed, shaking my hand effusively.

I began, with pardonable pride, to relate my adventure. It was some time before he seemed to understand, and looked at me with a polite air of listening, but without any great show of interest. When he did understand, however, he started up in a great state of excitement, ejaculating phrases of which I could just catch the words, "Sapristi!"—"Un panthère!"—"La mosquée!"—"Qu'elle horreur!"—"Mais les Arabes!"

When he had calmed down a little, he explained that the natives were frightfully fanatical, and that I had done a very rash act, which might be attended with unpleasant results. It appeared that the natives would be enraged at the idea of blood, even a panther's having been shed in a sacred place by an infidel. In fact, it seemed that I, as well as the panther, had been guilty of a grave act of sacrilege. However, there was nothing to be done. I took the hint of my friend Camille, and left for Algiers by the early diligence the next morning.

For some time I heard no more of the adventure. But one morning I received a case, which on being opened proved to contain a panther's skin, together with a letter from M. Camille, informing me that the Arabs had been mad with rage at the desecration of their mosque, and that if they could only have discovered the perpetrator of the terrible deed, his life would certainly have paid the penalty of his temerity.

On the whole I felt glad that I had escaped back to Algiers, and cheated them of their revenge.

E. A. R. B.

IN SUNNY CLIMES.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Letters from Majorca," etc.

IF the shores of the Mediterranean are matchless, surely the same may be said of the waters of the sea itself. The eye never wearies of gazing upon these blue and green transparencies. The warm sunlight flashes upon them, and at once you have an array of dazzling jewels in the rarest setting. That liquid purple, so intense and tangible, you will not find in the deepest waters of the Atlantic. Almost we envied the adventurous Maltese as they plunged into the cool waters after silver coins. We longed to do likewise, but these natives were evidently half fishes, whilst we could pretend to be

othing more or less than men.

We steamed out of Malta almost with regret. We had not been ng enough in the little island to tire of it or find out its monotony. hese few hours had been associated with intense sunshine, with uaint streets, with the orange groves and gorgeous blooms of San ntonio, with richly endowed churches and tapestried chambers, mpered by cold crypts and creepy skeletons. We had revelled the glorious views from the Bastions, undoubtedly some of the ost striking in the world; and as much as ever we were impressed ith the grandeur of the harbour as we steamed between the forts nd put out to sea.

Darkness fell, and the moon rose, and the stars came out.

The piano was brought up on deck, but everyone probably was ed with their day and dissipations in Malta. Dancing flagged at

the end of five minutes. Someone struck up the Boulanger March; but even these lively strains came to an end before the march was half over, and finished up with a hopeless and sudden discord which caused the performer himself to start with horror from his seat, and close the piano for the night.

The next morning found us out of sight of land, crossing the Mediterranean on our way to Brindisi. The day passed uneventfully. Scarcely a sail broke the monotony of the water. The very porpoises kept out of sight and were evidently disporting elsewhere. The small dissipations which marked the hours on deck went on as usual. The Ring and the Bucket, as someone called the exciting game; "after Browning" they kindly explained, because it was as difficult to accomplish the one as to fathom the other. This no doubt was rank heresy; but, from the popularity of the sentiment, it was evident that the passengers numbered few supporters of the Browning Society. Cricket went on "for'ard;" lounging, posing, and mild flirtations in the stern.

Minerva was no more. That is to say, she was in Malta, where, of course, she was very much; no doubt doing her best to circumvent the wicked soldiers. Miss Languish, deprived of this moral restraint, made a dead set at "Dear Tom," and so alarmed the poor creature that he took refuge in the second-class saloon, where he treated all who would listen to him to melancholy tunes on the piccolo. But there was a certain air of determination about Miss Languish which seemed to say that, by hook or by crook, by fair means or foul, by soft arts and seductive blandishments, or by the "hubble, bubble, toil and trouble" of the witches' cauldron, come weal or come woe, she would compass her ends. As both were going out to Australia, she had in her favour all the advantages of what someone has called the dangers of juxtaposition. Philosophers say that if a given woman makes up her mind to marry a given man, he is as hopelessly lost as the poor fly in the spider's web. No wonder then, if this be true, that marriage is sometimes a failure.

All the passengers had, as it were, scarcely begun their journey; we, on the contrary, were about to terminate ours. To-morrow morning we should part from the *Batavia*. Consequently we now looked at life from a different point of view. In the last days, the last hours of a journey, one's emotions undergo a transformation. Everything changes. "All the air a solemn stillness holds." The gilded rainbow fades from our sky. The scene is about to disappear. Something has died or is dying to us. Perhaps we are about to return to grey skies and prosy thoroughfares and black Mondays, wherein men must work in order that women may *not* weep: those, at least, who have fallen victims to the Miss Languishes of the world, or have sisters, cousins and aunts to cater for. Will it be so when the last hour of all shall come; when work is done and the hands are folded, and the world is passed? In that dread

hour will all change in this mysterious way, and shall we see that in many of our most cherished ambitions we have only been pursuing vain shadows? It will, undoubtedly.

The day passed on to night—our last night on board—and again the moon rose and the stars came out. To-morrow, Sunday, we should land at Brindisi, and bid a long good-bye to the *Batavia*, leaving the good ship to continue her journey to Australia. Dancing to-night was a little more animated. "Dear Tom," who had ventured out of his hiding-place, was captured by Miss Languish, who forthwith began spinning her web. Ere many days he would become hopelessly entangled. Our last game at Euchre was played; mutual regrets were exchanged, in the midst of which, punctually at 10.30, the lights went out. The voice might tremble and be heard, but if the eyes overflowed they could not be seen.

Early the next morning we reached Brindisi. The approach to the town was a gorgeous and magnificent sight, simply from the effect of colouring. The sun had risen with unequalled splendour, flushing sky and sea with a rosy light. The shores of Italy were glowing and golden. The intensity of colouring dazzled one's vision and took captive the imagination. There was no beauty of scenery, no luxuriance of vegetation; but it was not needed: this gorgeous golden glow was sufficient. It was an earthly paradise.

As we steamed up to the town, it looked like a very ordinary Italian town, though perhaps less picturesque than these generally are. A long row of houses stretched down the quay, not enriched with quaint balconies or the bright colours one so often sees. If the truth must be told, they looked rather dirty and dilapidated. It was early morning, but on the quay a small crowd was of course collected, of the usual sort. Dark Italians with flashing eyes, looking lazy and lounging; boys devouring luscious melons, regardless of appearances or anything but the enjoyment of the fruit, with a freedom which, I believe, we envied, and would have imitated if we could have done so undetected.

We were some time getting thoroughly alongside, but at last it was accomplished and landing became possible.

Before finally leaving the *Batavia* we went on shore to reconnoitre, as Robinson Crusoe would have said, and to ascertain what sort of a pied-à-terre we should find during our short sojourn in Brindisi.

And first of all we found that we should have to change our preconcerted plans. One very often has to do so in this world, and with many a heartache. In the present instance it gave us no very great unhappiness, for it was merely changing one charming route or another perhaps equally so. We had wished to run down to Otranto, gaze upon its Castle, and recall the scenes of that mysterious, though never specially interesting tale which has a place in childhood's recollections; yet never half so thrilling as the mysteries

VESUVIUS, FROM NAPLES

On the Way to Sorrento.

of Udolpho, or the old English Baron, with all its ghosts and creepy corridors.

Then we had wished to visit Naples, return to Brindisi, and sail up the Adriatic to Venice. This we soon found to be impossible. Boats would not fit in with our arrangements; and the journey to Naples was so long and uncomfortable, that to take it a second time was out of the question.

As for the Castle of Otranto, we were dissuaded from attempting it by the emphatic language of the landlord of the hotel. "There is absolutely nothing to see there," he remarked energetically. "I never heard of anyone going there. It is nothing but a sand heap crowned by an old ruin."

Nevertheless, to us it was, to a certain extent, classic ground, and we should have looked with interest and a certain romantic pleasure upon the sand heap and its old ruin. But the landlord evidently despised sentiment, and probably had never heard of Horace Walpole; and his contempt bore the usual fruit of ridicule upon a weak mind—we gave up the idea of visiting the Castle of Otranto. Our time was somewhat limited, and under the circumstances it scarcely seemed worth while devoting a whole day and many tropical hours in a stifling railway carriage for the sake of seeing a sand heap and an old ruin.

All who have to write periodically to friends or relatives in India are familiar with the word Brindisi. More than that, they have almost an affection for it, since most Indian letters are marked for this route.

But most of us know very little about the place itself, and probably nine people out of ten could not tell you whether it is on the Adriatic or the Mediterranean. Perhaps, therefore, it is fortunate that there is not very much to be known about it; and that ignorance in the matter is not fatal to one's character, or necessary to a finished education.

This Brindisi, the guide books tell us, was the Brundusium of the ancients, the greatest naval station the Romans possessed in the Adriatic. Thus its history goes far into the past.

We saw few signs of antiquity about it in the present. There was a great deal that was modern, neglected and uninteresting; very little that was ancient. If it possesses any Roman relics or antiquities, we did not see them; they did not appear on the surface, and it was too hot to search them out. Besides, Roman antiquities are so much one like another. It is only in such a place as Rome that you can get up the true spirit and emotion supposed to be inspired by a Roman antiquity; and when once you have seen Rome and know it by heart, you have seen all. For you the chapter of Roman antiquities is closed. You may find the ruins of an old wall here, the remains of an ancient bath there, the fragments of a once cold and creepy crypt somewhere else, herring-boned in masonry,

sepulchral in aspect, damp and mouldy in atmosphere; all as orthodox as possible; but it is only a pretence when all is said and done.

On landing, we found we could be taken in at the hotel on the quay. Yet it was so full that we had to wait an hour for our room. Here, after due debate with the landlord, we finally settled our plans. This was to give up Otranto; to abandon the Adriatic and Venice; to take the evening train for Naples, and spend the remainder of our time in visiting the more famous towns and cities which lay in our direct route homewards.

For we had none too much time before us. Mauleverer was due at his shooting-box in Scotland at the beginning of October, where he had arranged a tolerably large gathering; but he decided to give himself an extra fortnight, provided his brother would consent to play host during the fortnight's additional absence. This was satisfactorily arranged by telegraph: an advantage we possess over our ancestors who were born in the early days of the nineteenth century. What advantages our "heirs, successors and assigns" will possess over us a hundred years hence, probably neither the Witch of Endor, nor the witches in Macbeth, nor the greatest witch of the present day, would venture to disclose.

We went back to the steamer, settled up our accounts, made our adieux, which, though without tears, were not without regrets, and left the *Batavia*—probably for ever. About ninety additional passengers were expected by the mail train; every berth on board was taken; every seat at every table large and small would be filled; the vessel would be crowded; the Babel appalling. And on this account, if on no other, our regret at leaving was certainly not an unmixed sorrow.

Our first visit was to the post-office, a very unofficial-looking building, to which we were conducted by an hotel porter. Here we found letters from friends in England, which were given to us in a manner as unofficial as the building. We were handed a batch of letters of at least three hundred in number, and were begged to make our selection.

It was all very right to repose this confidence in us; but the post-office clerk could scarcely be a Lavater; and even the great physiognomist was not infallible; and the practice is not to be recommended for imitation. We found about a dozen letters awaiting us, and when we had put them apart the clerk did not even trouble to look at them and ascertain that in deed and in truth they were ours.

Brindisi owes its present prosperity to the fact that it is the point of departure for the Indian mails. It ought, therefore, to be grateful to this little island of ours. I don't much think it is so, for we found the hotel abominably dear and the cab fares extortionate. The only mark of supreme deference we received as Englishmen was from the above-mentioned postal clerk, whose conduct in handing us the

whole of the letters at the Poste Restante was, in spite of imprudence a very delicate and pretty way of intimating that an Englishman, like Cæsar's wife, was above reproach. (N.B. for the benefit of the above postal clerk. There *are*, unfortunately, exceptions to this rule.)

There is nothing to see in Brindisi. It sustained a siege in the days of the Romans: a siege organised and carried out by Cæsar against Pompey; but the sleepy, unenterprising inhabitants have kept no traces of this; not so much as a pile of skulls and cross bones, or even a few stones sprinkled with the blood of Pompey. It is a great oversight on their part; and the sooner they discover and arrange a few of these interesting Roman remains, the better it will be for the prosperity of the town and the happiness of deluded visitors.

Just outside the post-office was the market. Although it was Sunday, the market was spread. It was a very poor affair, without any of the picturesqueness of so many of the Italian markets. Often their fruit and vegetable stalls are quite studies in art and colouring. There was nothing of the kind in Brindisi. The streets were dirty, the houses looked dilapidated and poverty-stricken, the men and women were not at all handsome; there was a general air of neglect and indifference about the whole place.

There was very little to see in the place. The ruins of the circular church of San Giovanni, with its faded frescos, said to have belonged to the Knights Templars. The fine harbours, with the ancient dykes, constructed of course by the inevitable Cæsar. The marble column near the uninteresting cathedral, with its base adorned with the heads of mythical sea monsters. The castle, with its round towers, commenced by Frederick II., who was crowned in the cathedral and then married Yolande in 1225.

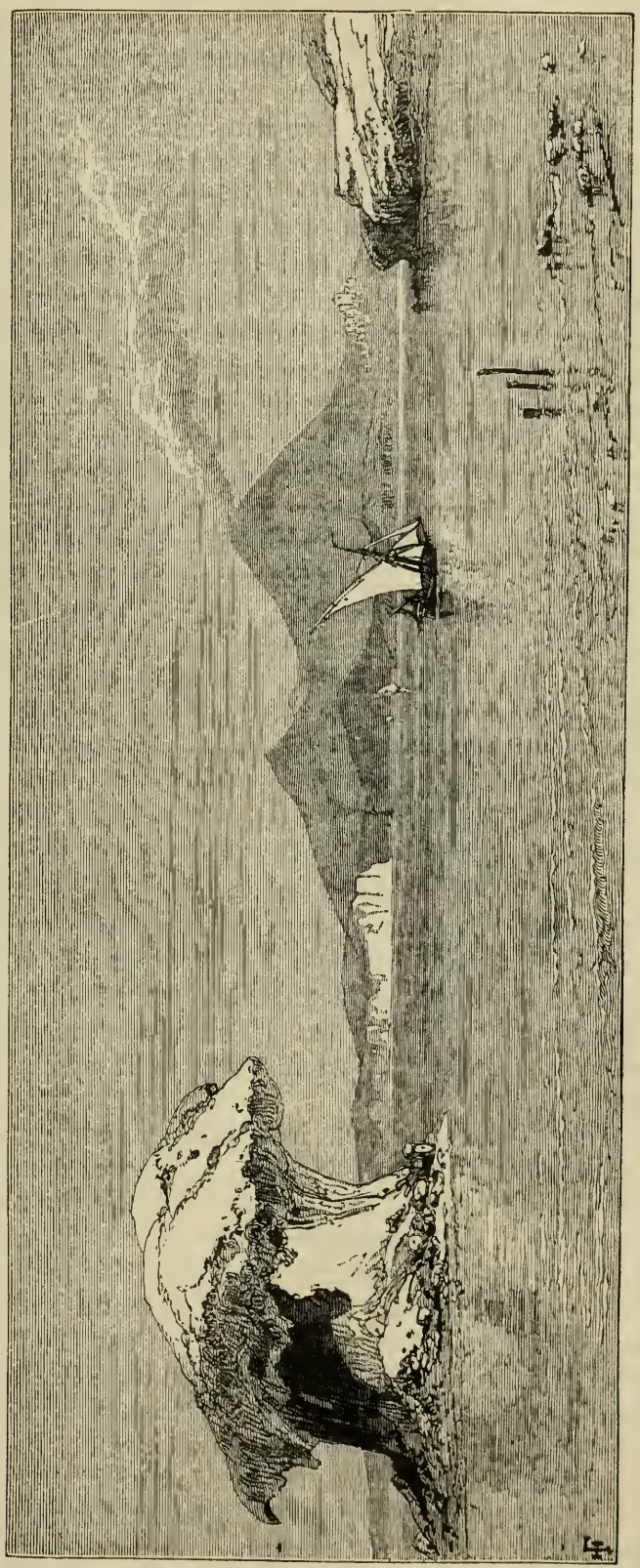
Not far from the cathedral is shown the house in which Virgil is said to have died, nineteen years before the Christian era. One naturally gazes at it as the most interesting object to be seen in Brindisi; but, at the same time, one looks upon the whole thing very much as a legend; and it may be that the house did not come into existence for many a century after Virgil's death.

So the attractions of Brindisi being soon exhausted, we took a short drive into the open country. All beauty of scenery and vegetation consisted in vineyards, of which one has such an abundance in Southern Italy. To the eye unfamiliar with these signs and symbols of a southern clime, nothing is more charming, more singular and startling, than these endless vineyards—this inexhaustible supply of grapes. They are equally picturesque and romantic. Nothing can be more so than to see a group of young men and maidens leaving work at the end of the day, their brows entwined with the graceful leaves and tendrils of the vine, their handsome faces and picturesque costumes according so well with the beauty of the scene, whilst the

broad, gorgeous light of day has given place to the softer shades of evening, and lovelit glances and tender tones accord with the sentiment of the hour.

Not that we saw anything of all this to-day, though we did other days. There was no subdued light, but a very full and burning sun. We journeyed over white roads inches thick in dust. There was no shade or shelter from the glare.

Presently we stopped at a vineyard and alighted. An Englishwoman came forth from the very prosy-looking house, and conducted us amongst the vines, which grew terrace above terrace. Tall vines, interlacing each other, climbed up long poles, very much like our hop-gardens in England. Most of the grapes had been plucked for wine. Of those that remained, some were curious in shape, very long and narrow, and therefore, our interesting



VESUVIUS, FROM CAPRI.

guide informed us, called ladies' fingers. These grapes are for the wine press, not for eating. In the midst of the vineyard was a deep well, in which, far, far down, one saw one's reflection. It looked so cool and inviting that one almost felt inclined to plunge in, and, like Narcissus, falling in love with one's reflection, disappear for ever, and begin existence afresh in some "cool grot and mossy cell" under those sleeping waters. We thought better of it, and remained above ground.

It was quite charming enough to tempt one to do so. This wonderful atmosphere, this golden glamour that sat upon all, intoxicated one with a dreamy, voluptuous sensation. It was all so different from the blue skies and blue waters of the Mediterranean; so delicious to wander about the terraces amidst the fragrant grapes. They had not all been plucked, and what remained were at our disposal. If an especial bunch tempted one, we had but to put forth a hand and gather it. It was singular, too, to hear our guide discoursing in fluent English, and somehow seemed as out of place here, in this remote part of Italy, as a vineyard would look in St. Paul's Churchyard. It was equally curious and unromantic to hear her declare that she preferred the prosiest and most crowded streets of London to the loveliest vineyards, the most gorgeous sunsets Italy could boast. From the higher ground we could see the harbour, and the blue waters of the Adriatic shimmering in the distance—waters that were to know us no more.

We went back to the town. Time was passing; the afternoon shadows were beginning to lengthen. We had a long night-journey before us, and it was necessary to fortify ourselves for the ordeal.

For in Italy, and especially out of the ordinary beaten tracks, these night-journeys are to be avoided. It is not travelling made easy. Sleeping cars, fauteuils-lits, coupés—these luxuries are conspicuous by their absence. You must be content with ordinary carriages, and think yourself fortunate if by chance you find one in part empty.

We were lucky enough in finding one altogether so. Nevertheless, it was a most tedious journey. The cushions were hard, the train rattled and rumbled and jolted. Whether it is the ordinary habit of the trains to do this or whether the carriages were badly screwed up on this occasion, deponent sayeth not, for he does not know. The effect was the same. A Scotchman would have roused up the next morning with a "sore head;" we, being English, called it a headache, but of that splitting sort which sees sparks and flashes of lightning in the atmosphere. Mauleverer, on the other hand, belongs to that irritating genus who would go through a century of fatigue and smile serenely at the end of it. Once, up in the wilds of the land, for a whole fortnight he shot for ten hours a-day over hill and moor, and would have gone on for several weeks longer, had not his companions given in and "gone South," very much the worse for

wear, and he, not caring to be left to solitude and the tortures of a burdened conscience, went also.

It was a journey of twelve or fourteen hours from Brindisi to Naples. When night passed away, and the sun rose, the whole country was a vision of inexhaustible beauty. The magnificence and luxuriance of the scene atoned for the barrenness of the ancient city of Brundusium. Glorious hills rose in every direction, chain upon chain. We passed through an infinity of vineyards, the grapes hanging in richest clusters. In these early hours the world was sleeping, and there was nowhere sign or token of living being. But the sun shot upwards, and the world awoke, and groups of men and women began to be seen on the long white roads, going to their daily work.

And then, by and by, as the train wound in and out amidst the hills and the vineyards, up rose Vesuvius. What is it that always excites and inspires one at the sight of this burning mountain—beautiful in its cruelty? There it for ever is, a pillar of fire and smoke, sending forth flames and black clouds, and, occasionally, streams of molten lava that lick the earth with living tongues of torture, and volumes of ashes that have buried cities and people in their pitiless fury. It has cost more lives, more misery, than the greatest battle that ever was fought. It has come down upon its victims like a thief in the night, and hurled them, all unawares, in its living tomb. We know not from one day to another that it may not repeat and exceed its worst ravages. Nay, some day it will surely do so. And yet we love it, and point to it proudly, and declare that it is one of the charms and glories of Naples, and that Naples would not be Naples without it.

At night, when darkness falls, and the red flames show out and seem to caress the sky, we gaze upon it with irresistible fascination. Its very silence makes it portentous. A sense of mystery surrounds it, as unfathomable as it is ever present. It gives rise to emotions that even Longfellow could only dimly realise by a night's devotion, spent in solitude upon the burning hill.

For our own part, a shorter visit, by night or day, seemed sufficient for any ordinary mortal. At night it is more weird and mysterious than by day. If you are mounted your horse pursues an almost invisible path. The starlit canopy above, where possibly a full moon may be following her course, seems a direct rebuke to the angry fiery flames issuing like living tongues from the mouth of the crater. It is a less beautiful excursion, but almost more effective, without the full moon, as the darkness is more intense, the sense of mystery greater. For, argue as we will, the burning mountain seems almost a miracle in Nature: an abnormal condition of things to which we do not grow accustomed by familiarity. But it is one of those things that must be seen to be realised; like the blue of the Mediterranean, the entrance to the Golden Horn, the vast tracks of a desert, the gigantic vegetation of the Far West.

But if the path is almost invisible, your horse knows his way blindfold, and neither errs nor stumbles. Besides that, you are not alone, for the landlord of the little inn at Pompeii is probably with you—he or some other equally trustworthy guide.

After a long and slow ascent, you reach the mouth of the crater. It is horrible to contemplate. As you gaze downward, shuddering, an almost insane desire seizes you to hurl yourself into that yawning gulf. A far-off hissing sound seems to penetrate your ears, as if this were purgatory and the souls of the condemned were in torment. Flame and smoke and a sulphureous vapour appear to rage and contend for victory. You are blinded and choked. A shower of ashes, an extra volume of cloud, send you backward with an exclamation of dismay. You feel as if another eruption were about to happen—another Pompeii to be buried in hopeless ruin.

Your guide laughs at your nervousness. In his case familiarity has bred contempt. To him, that which may happen at any moment never happens at all. The long-expected passes into the regions of the impossible. He fears no eruption, no living tomb, no buried city. Though all his earthly possessions are at the foot of this sometime holocaust to Nemesis, he sleeps as calmly in his bed as though death and danger did not at all times over-shadow him! I suppose we are all alike in this matter, minus the few exceptions who prove the rule. This must be why, to the old man of sixty, even death itself, the only certain thing in life, seems more visionary, farther off, than it does to the youth of twenty.

As you gaze into this awful gulf—though you cannot see far down—suddenly a stream of lava hisses upwards and runs down the hillside. Fortunately, it is not on your side. But again you exclaim, and again your guide manifests his superior indifference. Then he manages to embed a coin in a piece of the lava whilst it is yet hot, and by-and-by, if he has been successful, he will present it to you as a souvenir of your visit.

As a remembrance it is superfluous. No one who has mounted Vesuvius by night will ever forget the sensation. You seem to stand face to face with death. At any moment you may be overtaken by the most horrible of fates. Your grave, like that of Moses, shall be unknown. But you are fascinated, and you gaze and gaze into the fiery furnace, the yawning gulf, the black pit of destruction. Instinctively a terrible verse rings in your ears, and you pray to escape the doom: "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

You find that it is a greater ordeal to go down again than it was to come up. If you walk, you grope and stumble, and your footing seems uncertain. You cannot divest yourself of a sensation that the avenging mountain has only delayed your fate with a refined cruelty! With every step it seems about to open and swallow you up. Imagine such a moment: far worse even than that moment when at sea you behold your vessel sinking and the waters closing around you.

If, on the other hand, you are still on horseback, the sensation is almost more uncomfortable and much more tiring. The patient

LOOKING INTO THE CRATER.

beast puts on an action very much like that of a camel labouring under a burden. In the darkness, you seem everlastingly about to pitchpole over a precipice. The sea stretched out before you is an

illimitable space given over to chaos. A few lights twinkling upon it here and there look like lamps of another world waiting to light you on your journey from this.

At length you reach the bottom. A nervous and devout Italian would ejaculate a fervent Paternoster, and you utter a no less earnest thanksgiving. The excursion is over, the danger is past. You do not like deeds of darkness, and you are glad. It had to be done, it ought to be done; but it really required a little courage. All this, no doubt, adds zest to the recollection, charm to the afterthought.

By day the excursion is very different. It is not half so thrilling. The sense of mystery is lost. The fascination of the horrible and the terrible and the portentous has evaporated with the shades of night. The mountain is not much more awe-inspiring than a ghost at mid-day. But ghosts are wise; wiser than we are. We often make mistakes, they never do. They never appear at mid-day, for they know that such a visit would be of none effect. They never waste their power and influence.

So, comparatively speaking, going up Vesuvius by daylight is a very tame and ordinary affair: especially in these days when there is a royal road to the crater, and the ascent is made shamefully easy.

But then you have a reward of another kind. All round and about you is one of the most glorious views in the world. Surely it is almost matchless. As you ascend higher and higher, so you become more and more impressed. The view expands only to show forth fresh beauties. That black column of smoke above you enchains your attention far less than the surrounding magnificence.

Far, far above you is such a canopy of Heaven as in England you never dream of: for you cannot dream of what you have never conceived: a blue vaulted dome, high and ethereal, in which rides a burning, molten, glowing, golden sun. In this rarified air the heart exhilarates you. Here you can perfectly imagine that there have been, that there are, sun worshippers. You pity the benighted heathen, but you do not wonder at them. What object in nature is so glorious as that health-giving, warmth-bestowing, ever-travelling globe? His presence is light and life; his absence seems death itself.

Light and life he certainly is to-day, gilding everything with magic unutterable. A fairy world lies around you, renowned in history, extolled in song. The charm of sadness is there equally with the tangible joys of a full nervous existence. And these sad recollections of the past are as valuable as is water to a landscape, beauty to a woman, voice to the nightingale. Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought, and the luxury of pain enters into our most impressive moods. Thus it is certain that if Naples would not be Naples without Vesuvius, so Vesuvius in its turn would lose half its charm were it not for the shadow of sorrow which surrounds it the magic words of Herculaneum and Pompeii.

At your feet lie the ruins of Pompeii, which year by year are being more and more opened up. By-and-by there will be nothing left to discover, and many an Othello will then find his occupation gone. A great plain stretches before you, bounded by a chain of hills. These stand out wonderfully against the background of that blue sky. Often they seem to reflect its colour, and a purple mist, beautiful and romantic, gently veils them. The plain is full of life; rich vegetation alternated by towns and villages. Lovely villas nestle on he hill-sides, with gardens that are simply earthly paradises. Here Romeos and Juliettes might live and love for ever.

Long white roads lead towards Naples, and Naples itself sleeps in the far distance. All the hum of the noisy city cannot reach you here. To your left stretches the great Bay, its waters gently washing these classic shores. These waters are of the deepest ultramarine, and they flash and flame in the sunlight. White-winged boats, pure as the wings of a celestial visitant, are gliding to and fro, wafted by the gentlest of breezes. Beyond all lies the Island of Capri, rising upwards with all its beauty of form. Everything else that is beautiful about it is lost from here. You must imagine its luxuriant vegetation, the white foam of the gently breaking waves as they wash its base; the clinging vines, the drooping creepers that decorate its gardens. A lovely haze, now purple, now golden, almost always veils this Capri. For centuries it has been the delight of artists, the home of romance. For here you may find nature in her diversified moods: rich luxuriance side by side with wild and rugged grandeur; gently sloping shores contrasted by precipitous rocks that plunge boldly, unbrokenly, into the sea. Its vineyards yield grapes for the celebrated wine of the country, and its orange-groves perfume the air.

Close to it, separated only by a little sea, lies Sorrento, with its fair women, its lovely walks, its broken picturesque archways, its deep ravines, its frequent torrents. Sorrento has been celebrated from all time. Its plains, surrounded by undulating hills, are fertile as those of Eden—and surely as beautiful. Vineyards and orange-groves intermingle their charms and perfume; the delicate pomegranate waves side by side with the no less sweet but less fruitful acacia.

All this you may see, and much more you may imagine, from your vantage ground of Vesuvius. But, by day or by night, once on the summit, that yawning chasm will claim your attention, and, if you have a vivid imagination, excite your awe. As you gaze upon it and upon the ruins far below, insensibly your mind will lose itself in the bygone ages. A vision will rise up before you. The sun is suddenly shut out from the sky. The air is darkened. Tongues of flame, streams of molten lava cast a lurid glare upon all. An avalanche of cinders appears to fall from the sky. People hurrying in the streets of Pompeii are overtaken. Some gain the shore and put

out to sea, which is tempestuous and agitated. But too many find a horrible death in the midst of their vigorous life. They are buried in a living tomb, to be discovered eighteen centuries later, charred and petrified. And after all that time, pity and sympathy are still aroused, and the flesh creeps and the nerves thrill at the awful doom.

Was it destroyed for its wickedness, like the Cities of the Plain? Or was it simply an act of nature guided by an unerring Hand, carrying with it a mercy, which we have no right to doubt was there, simply because we cannot raise the veil which separates us from the infinite and confines our vision? For here we see through a glass darkly; and only because we are unable to trace the end from the beginning in the life of a nation, individually or collectively, is so much that now happens to us apparently full of contradiction and hard to be understood.

À RIVEDERCI.

So I shall meet thee otherwhere,
Small matter were it near or far;
To me you still were fairest fair,
Till time the crystal gates unbar.
Since in the bygone days of golden weather—
Sped all too soon beneath a cloudless sky—
We learnt afresh the sweetness of together
Unsorrowed by the sadness of good-bye.

So I may greet thee, whatsoe'er
The manner of your greeting be;
Some lingered sweetness yet shall fare,
For old sake's sake to you and me.
And ever, though its joy be fraught with sorrow,
Some torch of hope may light a beacon-ray,
To mark the dawning of a brighter morrow,
And teach our hearts the meaning of to-day.

P. Shaw Jeffrey.

THE SHAPES THAT DREAMS MAY TAKE.

IT is fully understood that many most interesting and curious dreams are yet but a continuation in sleep of those methods of mental exertion to which the dreamer is accustomed. Other cases there are in which the powers of memory or of insight, dormant or latent in the waking hours, are strangely stirred or exalted during the reign of slumber. Yet there remain certain instances, as well authenticated as any other incidents of human life, which cannot be fully explained by any of these theories. In this paper we desire to tell a few stories of dreams belonging to this last class, to suggest any explanation which may seem worthy of the reader's consideration, and to call attention to specially inexplicable points.

We will begin with some cases which have actually been elucidated in British law-courts, commencing with one recorded at a date when, it must be remembered, the belief in witchcraft was strong, and scores of people were burned or hanged on evidence which would now do no more than consign whoever tendered it to the doom of an insane asylum.

In the year 1695, a Mr. Stockden was robbed and murdered in his own house in the parish of Cripplegate. There was reason to believe that his assailants were four in number. Suspicion fell on a man named Maynard, but he succeeded at first in clearing himself. Soon afterwards, a Mrs. Greenwood voluntarily came forward and declared that the murdered man had visited her in a dream, and had shown her a house in Thames Street, saying that one of the murderers lived there. In a second dream he displayed to her a portrait of Maynard, calling her attention to a mole on the side of his face (she had never seen the man), and instructing her concerning an acquaintance who would be, he said, willing to betray him. Following up this information, Maynard was committed to prison, where he confessed his crime and impeached three accomplices. It was not easy to trace these men, but Mr. Stockden, the murdered man, again opportunely appeared in Mrs. Greenwood's dreams, giving information which led to the arrest of the whole gang, who then freely confessed, and were finally executed. The story is related by the curate of Cripplegate, and "witnessed" by Dr. Sharp, then Bishop of York.

On this story, be it remarked that Mrs. Greenwood's dreams only verified suspicions already aroused. Maynard had been suspected at first: her dream brought home the guilt to him. It did not deal with his accomplices until Maynard, in his turn, had implicated them.

A somewhat similar incident came before a legal tribunal nearly a

century afterwards, when two Highlanders were arraigned for the murder of an English soldier in a wild and solitary mountain district known as "the Spital of Glenshee." In the course of the "proof for the Crown," to use the phrase of Scottish law, another Highlander, one Alexander McPherson, deposed that on one night an apparition appeared to come to his bedside, and announced itself as the murdered soldier, Davies, and described the precise spot where his bones would be found, requesting McPherson to search for and bury them. He fulfilled but the first part of the behest, whereupon the dream or apparition came back, repeated it, and called its murderers by their names.

It appears that, with the strangely stern common-sense which in Scotland exists side by side with the strongest imaginative power, the prisoners were acquitted principally on account of this evidence, whose "visionary" nature threw discredit on the whole proceedings. One difficulty lay in the possibility of communication between the murdered man and the dreamer, since the one spoke only English and the other nothing but Gaelic! Years afterwards, however, when both the accused men were dead, their law agent admitted confidentially that he had no doubt of their guilt.

Singularly enough, a story strikingly similar in many of its details found its way before a criminal tribunal in our own century.

In the remote and sequestered Highland region of Assynt, Sutherland, a rustic wedding and merry-making came off in the spring of 1830. At this festivity there figured an itinerant pedlar named Murdoch Grant, who from that occasion utterly disappeared. A month afterwards, a farm-servant, passing a lonely mountain lake, observed a dead body in the water, and on its being drawn ashore, the features of the missing pedlar were recognised. He had been robbed, and had met his death by violence. The sheriff of the district, a Mr. Lumsden, investigated the affair without any result—in his searches being aided by a well-educated young man of the neighbourhood, one Hugh Macleod, ostensibly a schoolmaster, but then without employment.

One day the Sheriff chancing to call at the local post-office, Macleod's name, probably owing to the part he was taking in these investigations, came into the conversation, and the postmaster casually remarked that he should not have thought Macleod was so well off—he having recently changed a ten pound note at his shop. Mr. Lumsden's suspicions were aroused by this, and on his asking Macleod a few questions on the matter, he proved the young man to be untruthful. Therefore he put him under arrest, and caused his home to be searched. But none of the pedlar's property being found there, and no other suspicious circumstance transpiring, he was about to be released, when a tailor named Kenneth Fraser came forward with the following extraordinary story.

In his sleep he declared that the Macleods' cottage was presented

to his mind, and that a voice said to him in Gaelic, "The merchant's pack is lying in a cairn of stones, in a hole near their house." The directions given in this dream were carried out by the authorities: articles belonging to Grant were discovered, and the murdered man's stockings were presently found in Macleod's possession. He was accordingly charged with the crime. Kenneth Fraser formulated the evidence of his dream with great firmness and consistency. Macleod was condemned and executed, but not before making a full confession of his guilt.

Here again, as in the case of Mrs. Greenwood, we may notice that the dream is only revealed after suspicion had been already aroused. Fraser was a boon companion of Macleod's, and it has been suggested that in their carousings he got some hint of his comrade's terrible secret. A somewhat similar explanation might serve to account for McPherson's dream of the murdered English soldier, and even the antique visions of Mrs. Greenwood. The form of a dream was a convenient one in which either to veil a guilty complicity—or in the case of the Highlanders to escape that imputation of being an "informer" which is so hateful to the Celtic heart.

There is, however, an equally modern and less remote instance of a similar sort. In 1828, in Suffolk, Maria Martin was slain by her false lover—a crime known in sensational literature as "The Murder in the Red Barn." The stepmother of the deceased (says Mr. Chambers in his "Book of Days") gave testimony on the trial that she had received in a dream that knowledge of the situation of the body of the victim which led to the detection of the murderer.

The late Mr. Serjeant Cox, at a meeting of the Psychological Society in the year 1876, narrated a remarkable case which had come within his own experience in which dreams had played an important part, and the evidence for which he had himself heard given on oath in open Court.

A murder had been committed in Somersetshire. A farmer had disappeared and was not to be found. Two different men, living in different villages, some distance from where the farmer had disappeared, both had a dream upon the same night, and stated the particulars to the local magistrates. They said they had dreamed on that particular night that the body was lying in a well in the farm-yard. No well was known to be there at all, so the two men were laughed at. Some persons, however, went to the yard, and although there was no appearance of a well, they at last found one under some manure, and the body was in it: then, of course, on the principle of the proverb, "He who hides can find," the public began to suspect the two men themselves. But it was finally proved that the farmer had been murdered by his own two nephews, who had afterwards disposed of his body thus. Before these dreams, the dreamers had known nothing about the well in the yard. The nephews were hanged for their crime.

One would ask many questions anent this case—such as: Were these two dreamers conversant with the locality or with the nephews? Did they have any prior knowledge of each other? The lawyers, of course, were conducting a criminal case and not a scientific inquiry. One cannot help wondering how much evidence of this sort is tendered to the detective police—and whether it is always duly investigated. One readily understands that much of such dubious testimony is suppressed at its very source from fear of ridicule on the one hand or of suspicion on the other.

We have given these instances first, simply because they have been exposed to all the tests by which evidence is usually sifted.

We will now pass on to some of a different stamp, yet also attested by dates, proper names, etc.

In May, 1812, Mr. Spencer Perceval, Prime Minister of England, was shot in the lobby of the House of Commons, by one Bellingham.

It was claimed that eight days before the assassination, it was foreseen in a dream by a gentleman, a Mr. Williams, living near Truro, in Cornwall. The story has been often told, sometimes carelessly, sometimes with added "effects." We shall give the version of a gentleman whose father was with the dreamer at the date of his dream, as corrected by the version of another friend, who frequently heard the story from the lips of the dreamer himself, when in advanced age.

Mr. Williams, his brother and his partner, were, in the early part of May, 1812, visiting their mines in the Eastern part of Cornwall. Mr. Williams had lately sent his son, Michael (afterwards M.P. for the County), to London to confer with the Government respecting the duty on foreign copper. One morning, Mr. Williams, when driving with his friends, remarked that on the previous night he had had a singular dream of being in the lobby of the House of Commons, and seeing a tall man shoot a short one in the left side. He repeated this dream so often that his companions were rather annoyed. When he himself told the story in after years, he added that the shot was fired as from behind his shoulder, and that he heard an usher say that the murdered man was Mr. Perceval—that he had debated with his sons on the propriety of his going to London and warning the minister, but that they had dissuaded him, which he ever afterwards regretted. He added that it was eight days before the murder that he had this dream. His son, Michael, was in a Committee room opening off the lobby when the murder took place, and returned straight home, where his father, the moment he saw him, exclaimed that he knew the news he had brought. When the old gentleman went to London, he sought for portraits of the assassin and his victim, but was not satisfied with the first he saw of the former, as the hero of his dream had "basket buttons" on his coat. Presently he found a print in which this detail was correctly portrayed. Mr. Williams was generally considered a very practical and unimaginative man.

The murderer, Bellingham, in his confession, owned that the murder had been fully conceived in his own mind for fully a fortnight before the deed was committed.

Is it possible that some "rapport" was established between Bellingham and Mr. Williams, by the presence of Michael Williams in London—and that the dream was a kind of "thought transference?"

We will now adduce an instance where a dream was connected with the saving of a life.

A lady, whose full name and address were given with the original version of the story, had a young servant who was deaf and dumb. The girl fell into ill-health and it was thought desirable that she should have a change, but she was most reluctant to leave her mistress. One Tuesday morning, after taking a breakfast tray to a bedroom, she was seen no more. The household was in great distress and alarm. The neighbouring woods were searched, and a reach of the canal was let off. Nothing was heard of her all Wednesday and Thursday. On Friday morning, the superintendent of police, who had, of course, had full information of the disappearance, called at the house, and saying that he had received an impression that the girl was hidden somewhere on the premises, requested to make a minute search. He had never been in the house before, but went straight down to a certain cellar, and there to an open flue, wherein they found the girl jammed fast. The opening from the flue to the cellar was not above eighteen inches high, and how the girl had forced herself up it remained mysterious. They had to get bricklayers' tools and dig down the bricks before they could get her out.

Mr. Wedgwood (one of the family of the famous potter) made particular inquiries into this case. Two or three years having elapsed, the police superintendent chanced to have died. But his son remembered the case quite well. He said his father had roused his mother, in the middle of the night, saying that he knew now where that poor girl was hidden—up a chimney in the cellar of her mistress's own house. His father had not gone to rest again, but had started on his quest soon after daybreak.

A question to be asked here is, could the superintendent have received any description of the premises from any of his subordinates, —and had his mind dwelt for a moment on the cellar and the flue as a possible hiding-place? In this case, the picture might easily be renewed in a dream.

In 1876, a Captain Smalley, of West Droxbury, Massachusetts, U.S.A., received a handsome testimonial from the British Government as a recognition of his humanity in rescuing the crew of an Irish vessel in the previous winter. Captain Smalley's own story, as related at the time in American papers, was that on a certain November night, when six hundred miles out at sea, he awoke suddenly, strongly impressed by a dream, in which he had seen a number of men in imminent peril, whom he vainly attempted to

rescue. He told his wife at the time, saying he hoped that no shipwrecked crew stood in need of his services. On going to sleep again the dream was repeated with still greater distinctness—the men were seen to be on a wreck, in intense distress, and needing the utmost despatch if they were to be saved. The captain, waking, went on deck, and on the impulse of the moment altered the course of the vessel two points without any tangible reason; and then giving orders that he should be called at dawn, he retired to rest, and slept undisturbed. At daybreak he went aloft with his glass, and then discovered a ship far to windward with distress signals hoisted. Owing to the state of the wind and the waves, it was some hours before he could reach the wreck, whose crew had by that time betaken themselves to the boats, and were at once assisted on board Captain Smalley's vessel, just as the rising storm strengthened to a perfect hurricane, which raged for four days, and ultimately compelled Captain Smalley to take refuge in Gibraltar, instead of putting into Lisbon as he had intended.

Another picturesque and pleasant story comes from America, equally well attested by names, dates, etc. It was narrated in the *Hartford Times* of 1874, the editor vouching for its genuineness.

There was at that date resident in Hartford a Mr. John Eiswirth, a German by birth. He and his wife had been settled in America for nearly a quarter of century. Soon after they came over, they had a letter announcing that the wife's brother was already on his way from the Fatherland to the States. They naturally expected soon to see him, but he never came, nor did they ever hear of him from that date for a period of nearly twenty-five years. But in the spring of 1874, Mr. John Eiswirth, peaceable citizen of Hartford, dreamed a dream. It began in a sufficiently common-place way, by his seeming to take a seat in the railway cars at the Hartford depôt. He was not aware of any intention or wish to go anywhere, but felt simply whirled through vast expanses of country. At last the train slackened and he got out, but did not know where he was. Moving on with the other passengers, he asked the first man he met for the name of the place where he had arrived. The man answered "St. Louis," and the dreamer was more puzzled than ever since he had no business there, and wished himself back in Hartford. While standing in a state of miserable hesitancy, he suddenly saw his wife's long-lost brother approaching him, and they greeted with joyful effusion! The next moment the worthy German found himself awake in his bed, in his own house in Hartford. But the dream had made a great impression on him, and he thought he would follow it up by sending a letter to his brother-in-law, directed to St. Louis, marking outside the envelope, "If not called for within ten days, return to John Eiswirth, Hartford, Conn." In afterwards telling the story, he declared that he felt this was but a foolish action and sure to lead to nothing. Judge of his surprise, when

two days later a letter with the postmark "St. Louis" was put into his hand, and proved to be from the missing relative himself! It appeared that on his first arrival in the new country he had mislaid his sister's address, and then, amid the struggle for existence and the novelty of his surroundings, had, as too often happens, allowed his old ties to slip out of mind—though he was now glad enough to renew them.

One would like to ask many questions about this story. Was there any reason for this dream occurring after the lapse of twenty-five years? Had there been any change or death in the family?—or any conversation about the lost brother, or other stirring of dormant feelings? Had the brother in St. Louis had any occasion for specially remembering and yearning after the relatives he had so long left unsought for? Further information on these points might shed some more light on the narrative. Again, might not many mysteries be cleared up if more people took the "foolish" course of plain John Eiswirth, when he sent his "test" letter to St. Louis?

We will conclude our paper with two incidents selected from a great mass of similar narratives related in the huge volumes issued a short time ago by the Society for Psychical Research. We may premise that all these narratives and their evidences were carefully sifted and weighed before their publication, and that in their original form names, places and dates are given with punctilious accuracy. As these can be found there by those who desire to see them, it is best, for manifold reasons to exclude them from an article intended only to interest the general reader and rather to incite him to scientific inquiry than to satisfy that searching spirit.

In a simple, straightforward letter, written in 1885, a homely Quakeress thus gives the particulars of her remarkable experience:—

"In my dream I saw two respectably-dressed females driving alone in a vehicle like a mineral-water cart. Their horse stopped at a water dam to drink, but as there was no footing he lost his balance, and in trying to recover it, he plunged right in. With the shock the women stood up and shouted for help, and their hats rose off their heads, and as all were going down, I turned away, crying 'was there no one at all to help them?' upon which I awoke and my husband asked me what was the matter. I related the above dream to him, and he asked me if I knew them. I said I did not, and thought I had never seen either of them. The impression of the dream and the trouble it brought was over me all day. I remarked to my son it was the anniversary of his birthday—and my own also—the tenth of first month (Quaker term for January), and this is why I remember the date.

"The following third month (March) I got a letter and newspaper from my brother in Australia, letting me know the sad trouble which had befallen him in the loss, by drowning, of one of his daughters and her companion. Thou wilt see by the description given of it in the

paper how the event corresponded with my dream. My niece was born in Australia and I never saw her . . ."

The record of the Australian journal ran as follows :—

"Friday evening, January 11th. A dreadful accident occurred in the neighbourhood of W—— resulting in the death of two women . . . It appears they were driving in a spring cart . . . when they attempted to water their horse at a dam . . . The dam was ten or twelve feet deep in one spot, and into this deep hole they must have inadvertently driven, for Mr. M'K——, going to the dam some hours afterwards, discovered the spring cart and horse under the water, and two women's hats floating on the surface . . ."

The worthy Quakeress imagined that "considering our night is the Australian day," she must have been "in sympathy with the sufferers at the time of their accident," and hence her dream. But the editors of the Psychical Research Society shrewdly observe that she reckoned the difference of time the *wrong way*. The time in England which corresponded with the accident was the *early morning* of January 9th and so the dream which took place on the *night* of January 9th, must have followed the deaths by more than twelve hours. But the Quaker lady's husband, in appending a note to his wife's letter, unconsciously throws a singular light on this point—thus :

"As my wife's niece did not live with her father, he was not told of the accident *until the next morning*."

This would be about twelve hours after the death, and about the time the dream took place in England. Can it be that the bereaved father's distress, perhaps the very cry of his agony, impressed themselves upon the calm surface of his sleeping sister's mind?

The last story we shall give is very curious and most suggestive. Its narrator is an accomplished lady, who has done some excellent literary work, and is a member of an active and well-known philanthropic family.

She writes :—

"A servant, a Lincolnshire woman, has lived in our house for two years : and of her, whom I never see in the day, I dreamed, as portentously as if her troubles were my own. There is nothing remarkable in this young woman's character or experience. She is but an ordinary, rather rough specimen of a village girl, quiet and respectable.

"In my dream (day, month and year given) a long country lane was before me, in this I walked with the Lincolnshire cook, without speaking ; yet I knew that my companion was going with me as a sort of escort to some errand of my own. Then a face appeared over a hedge : a solemn, silent face, exactly resembling that of the one who silently moved beside me : the sternest suffering was impressed upon the plain, hard-lined countenance. From beside me, the country servant instantly departed to follow the warning, voiceless form through the hedge into a little house. Only a long minute passed and the

servant rushed from the hedge, absolutely wringing her hands, crouching to the ground in dumb agony. 'Tis my sister called me: she beckoned me in: but she will not speak, she will not have me with her.' As she spoke, the vision returned. It looked over the low hedge, with the same indescribable expression of sadness unspeakable, of a terrible woe impossible of utterance. It flung back its sleeve, and lifting one arm, pointed to a single white spot in the centre of a finger. And as suddenly as I had fallen on this dream, so suddenly I awoke. I tried to cast off the shadow the dream had cast on me.

"I repeated my dream before I left my bedroom. (The dreamer's sister corroborates this.) I asked the housemaid whether she knew of any reason her fellow servant might have to fear to hear bad news. She said 'No.' Nothing was said about the dream during Friday. . . but the same evening came the news that the country cook's sister was very ill, and had prematurely been confined with a child born dead. . . . The coincidence of dream and fact were marvellously similar. The poor woman, whom I saw with such dumb appeal on her countenance, was alone, unable to speak, meeting her trouble alone, her husband, who is a policeman, being on night duty."

We presume that the suffering woman had never seen her sister's mistress. Can it be possible that her agonised thoughts, turning to her sorely-needed relative, simply fastened upon the most sensitive mind in the vicinity? Had "the white spot on the finger" any relevance whatever?—or was it another impression jumbled up—perhaps the reminiscence of some injury the dreamer had noticed on one of the poor people among whom her charitable labours lay? Again, this is just one of the vague, unreasonable kind of dreams which we all know, and about which we seldom think of making any inquiry—and, indeed, inquiry would, in most cases, lead to nothing. Such a dream as this, for instance, might as easily have been associated with a servant in the next house—of whom the lady could have asked no question. Or such dreams might easily be mixed up with personal or even secret affairs, in which case investigation would be met with indignation or with lies!

We have not yet exhausted this mysterious land of dreams. There is yet another class, where the unseen which is foreshadowed is not of the Present or the forthcoming—but of the remote Future. The marvellous gift of prophetic insight rising from the low fogs of fortune-telling and witchcraft, through the white mist of "second sight" to the pure empyrean of prophecy and poetry, seems to have a root in the strange symbolism of certain dreams. We may discuss some of these on a future occasion.

ON THE BORDERLAND.

STAY, kindly death, ere yet our solemn way
Be entered on. Thou art the tardy friend
I waited for through many a weary day,
That thou might'st lead me to my journey's end.
Through all my loud-voiced woe thou didst not come,
Nor yet when low I lay in sorrow dumb!

I thought thou wouldst have been, long, long ago;
And learned to know thy face and love thy name;
But thou wert far from me in all my woe:
What wonder, then, that I did give thee blame?
For, in the darkest hour of my soul's sky,
No latch was lifted, but thy foot passed by!

And now thou leadest me with thy cold hand,
While by me sway thy garments dark as night;
Yet stay, oh friend, that I by thee may stand,
And waft a farewell from this solemn height
To those dear ones who long shall wait and weep
Ere yet "He giveth His beloved sleep!"

Men say thou art a King, with steeds of fate
Yoked to thy noiseless chariot of gloom;
And that thou leavest bare and desolate
Bright human homes; and bringest man to doom,
Like broken spars thrown on a wave-lashed strand,
Or scattered grain upon a storm-reaped land!

Stern, final guide, I would not call thee foe!
For, in my life thou long hast had a place;
And, though thy vital breath is human woe,
To me thou wearest a transfigured face:
Through greater strength than thine my soul can sing
Beside the beating of thy winnowing wing!

Thy smile is cold, as if all incomplete
Were my poor fragment of a lowly life.
How often weary were my bleeding feet!
How weak my arm at best amidst the strife!
Yet, think not, Death, the loyal miss their crown;
For, God takes up what mortals frail lay down!

ALEXANDER LAMONT.

MY CHANNEL PASSAGE.

By C. N. Carvalho.

TO a good sailor the crossing from Calais to Dover is, in a general way, wholly devoid of incident or adventure. The occasion to which I refer, however, proved an exception to this rule, and though the experience was, in many ways, trying to me, I can well imagine that an account of it might be amusing to others.

I was on the point of returning from one of the German baths where I had spent several weeks, when I received a letter from an old friend, now a widow, asking me to allow her son, a youth of seventeen, to travel home in my company.

"I must not tell Charley," she wrote, "that I put him under your care; that would be derogatory to his dignity; but I confess to you I shall be more comfortable if I know he is not travelling alone. He is so heedless he will never get into the right train, if someone does not look after him. He won't give you trouble in any other way," she added; "indeed, he may possibly be of use to you. He is a dear, good-natured fellow; you are sure to get on well together."

I had no objection to this arrangement. I would have done more than that to oblige Sophy—cousin Sophy, as I used to call her in my young days, though the relationship, if it existed, was a very distant one—so I wrote to Charley and told him to meet me at Cologne on a certain day which I named.

In due course the lad made his appearance. He was a good-looking young fellow, with bright, dark eyes and a winning smile, and had an air of being well satisfied with himself and his surroundings. He evidently took life easily. If the world were not made for Charley, it set no obstacles in his way. I don't know what he had learnt at school, but, if the rest of his attainments were to be judged by his knowledge of the German language, he had not exerted himself to any great extent. Charley never did, I found out later, exert himself if he could possibly avoid doing so.

We "got on," as his mother predicted, very comfortably. I have the talent, if I may call it one, of making boys or very young men at ease in my company, and my efforts in this case were very successful. Charley and I were soon on the most confidential terms. Before long he had favoured me with a description of his school-life in Germany, his views on the choice of a profession, and his tastes and favourite occupations; which last appeared, as far as I could make out, to be smoking, riding in the park, visiting the theatres, and other such lucrative pursuits.

Our journey to Brussels was destitute of adventure, and the fol-

lowing morning saw us on our road to Calais. Charley was a better traveller than his mother had led me to suppose. He was up and ready to start, though the hour fixed upon was a very early one; and at the railway station he registered the luggage with as much punctuality and exactness as a courier.

We found the sea, to use my companion's expression, lively. It was a fine, breezy day, with a bright blue sky overhead, and it was pleasant to sit and watch the great waves with their white crests chasing each other in their haste to get to shore. The boat was not full, which I was glad to notice—a crowded steamer is always disagreeable. Most of the passengers took refuge below, so we had the deck nearly to ourselves.

As we left the coast of France the wind grew stronger and my companion less talkative; so when the shore had faded from my view I settled myself comfortably on a cushion, took a book from my bag, and began to read. The story was an interesting one, and I was quite absorbed in it, till, roused by a change in the motion of the vessel, I looked up half expecting to see the white cliffs of Dover, and thinking what a short and pleasant run we had made. But no land was in sight; the steamer slackened speed, and in another moment came to a dead stop.

"I have come across a score of times," I said to Charley, who was lying on a rug at my feet, "but I never knew such a thing to happen before. It is bad enough when a train halts between two stations—that always makes me nervous—but at any rate one can get out. At sea, one feels doubly helpless."

"Can't you swim, Mrs. Calvert?" Charley asked, looking up into my face with an air of mock sympathy that was rather trying.

"No," I replied coolly, determined to give him no chance of making fun of me. "So you see if the boat should go down you have your work cut out for you. Go and see what is the matter, there's a good fellow."

There was nothing the matter—so Charley on his return reported. "It was all right and no end jolly (I am quoting Charley, remember) to be quite still. He wished they would go the whole way like that." How it was to be managed he did not say. And greatly to his disappointment the vessel, though making no progress, rocked in a manner that was decidedly unpleasant to anyone but a good sailor. I found it difficult to believe that we came to a standstill in mid-ocean for no reason, and when the excitement had a little calmed down I beckoned to the steward who was standing near me and begged him to explain the mystery.

"It's nothing of any consequence, ma'am," he replied with a friendly smile. "Only of course it will delay us a bit. The stuffing has come out of the piston—so I hear—and the engine won't work. We'd try to sail, but the wind is dead against us—it always is, seems to me, when it might be of use."

Charley suggested that it was jealous of the engines, at which the steward was much amused. I asked what would be done.

"They've signalled for a tug," he replied. "It will take us across in no time. Don't you be afraid, ma'am; it will be all right." And off he walked.

Before long the tug came to our assistance. An insignificant little thing it looked, but it did its work well, and we were soon scudding along to the satisfaction of all on board—theoretically.

The wind was now higher than it had been and the deck once more clear. The waves from time to time broke over it and drenched me with spray. I laughed at first, but the showers soon became so frequent that I saw I must go below, and had risen with that intention, when the steward to whom I had before spoken came up and asked me if I would like a private cabin—there was one unoccupied.

Though a good sailor, I confess to feeling more comfortable in the fresh air than in a hot, close cabin; so I accepted this offer with alacrity, and was soon ensconced in a tiny room at the side of the ship, from which I could watch the progress of the gale in comparative comfort.

It was a grand sight to look into the clear, green walls of water that rose up higher than the ship's side; a sight, I imagine, rarely seen as I saw it, for I had the advantage of the sun's rays to illumine the water and render it more transparent. I tried to make my companion appreciate its beauty, but he took more interest in watching the fate of the various packages that had been left on the deck, which the water was tossing from side to side. He put on his mackintosh after awhile, and went out to see the fun—so he told me; but I suspected that my young friend, though not "slain" as he would put it, felt a little "melancholy," and was glad to get away from my keen eyes.

I saw him later standing at the side of the vessel, talking with a tall, fair-haired young man apparently about seven or eight and twenty, whose countenance had attracted me when we first came on board. The two were in striking contrast as they stood together, Charley's flashing black orbs—his strong point—seemed to lack expression in comparison with those of the stranger. I have never seen such a pair of tender, appealing eyes in any other man's face; they would never look angry or fierce I was sure, let the provocation be what it might—that they could look deeply sorrowful I was destined to see before we parted. I could scarcely imagine their owner pleading unsuccessfully for any woman's love, and as I gazed on him, romantic speculations as to his past life began to weave themselves in my brain.

A sudden lurch, a shake that seemed to strain every timber in the ship sent all thoughts of this kind out of my head. I was thrown violently on the floor, and the water rushed through the open door of my little chamber and drenched me as I lay. Half blinded and

wholly confused, I rose and looked around. The ship now rocked slowly and painfully but made no progress. The tug lay at some little distance—she had stopped also; the rope had evidently broken and we had parted company.

People now rushed up from below, calling and screaming, and for some little time the confusion was general. The friendly steward came at length to my aid and put things straight with true sailorlike rapidity. He advised me to keep my door fastened in future and to place my cushions on the floor. I declined to do this, however, saying that such an accident was not likely to happen a second time.

"Don't be too sure, ma'am," he rejoined with a knowing shake of the head. "They've put on another rope, but the sailors tell me it's no stronger than the first one."

Charley came up bringing his new friend, whom he introduced as Captain Fortescue. I made light of my disaster, though I was far from comfortable, as anyone who has had a bath of salt-water under similar circumstances will readily understand. My cabin just held the three of us, and we sat and chatted together and ate biscuits; it was too rough to think of taking a regular meal. Captain Fortescue told us how he had come from India when he was quite a child, and since then he had made three or four voyages out and home. He did not mind the wind, he said, and this was not a storm; it was ——

What it was I never heard, for at that moment the treacherous rope gave way again, and it was only Charley's quickness of hand that saved me from a severe blow. I was glad now to take the steward's advice, and, amid much laughing and joking between the young men, my cushions were removed. The precaution was not taken too soon. In a very few minutes we went through the experience again. Things were now getting serious. Captain Fortescue went in search of the skipper and spoke to him. I could not hear what was said, but such a cloud of anxiety settled on the young soldier's face that I rose in terror and asked if there were any danger.

"Danger? None whatever, madam," the captain said, reassuringly. "No danger at all," he repeated. "We may not see Dover to-night—that's the worst that will happen to us. The tug has gone to fetch a good strong rope, but when it will pick us up, or where, I cannot say. We'll drift into the North Sea, I reckon."

"Into the North Sea," I exclaimed.

"With this wind, it is very possible," he continued. "Not but that we are safe enough there; it's only the delay——"

"Only!" interrupted Captain Fortescue. "Oh, how I wish I had gone in that tug. I must be in London to-night."

"You should have told me sooner," said the captain good-naturedly. "I could have managed that easily, but it's too late now. Of course I kept it quiet, or half the passengers would have wanted

to go in her: more than the boat could hold. I trust your business is not important."

"Is there enough food on board?" inquired Charley, the excitement of the situation having quite driven away all discomfort arising from the motion of the vessel.

"As much as we shall want," replied the skipper, laughing. "In weather like this the passengers don't require much. You are a wonderful sailor, madam," he went on, with a polite bow to me. "Captain Fortescue is an old traveller, he tells me, so I am not surprised he keeps his sea legs; but it is not often we find a lady so much at her ease in a gale like this, and in the Channel, too—the worst place for a chopping sea all the world over."

I laughed. Captain Fortescue, who had been listening gloomily, now asked if he could have a boat.

The captain glanced at him to see if he were serious, then he replied:

"I wish I could give you one, but it is out of my power. We have but two, and we may need them. I do not expect that, but I must be prepared. Besides, I have no men to send with you, and I dare not let you go alone."

"And one boat leaks," interrupted a sailor who had overheard the captain's words. "Better attempt to swim to shore than go in one of them."

The captain said nothing, but I could see he was annoyed. As he strode away, Charley turned to young Fortescue and asked why he was in such a hurry.

"I am bound to be in London by ten o'clock to-morrow morning at the latest," he replied. "Delay is impossible. It is a matter of life and death—to me."

"Telegraph," put in Charley with a wicked smile. Captain Fortescue gave an impatient gesture. I laid my hand on the boy's arm to check him. I was sure the need was urgent.

"Mrs. Calvert," Captain Fortescue resumed as he took a seat at my side, "our young friend, luckily for him, knows nothing of these things; but you, I am sure, will sympathise with me when I tell you how the case stands. To-morrow is—was to have been—my wedding day. If I do not appear in church to-morrow what will *she* think? Or, for I know she will forgive me, what will her parents think? They have only consented reluctantly as it is." (This seemed to escape from him involuntarily.) "In less than a week, too, I must start for India to join my regiment. I had hoped to have taken my wife with me; but now——"

"No one will think ill of you," I said earnestly. "Anxious they may be, but the anxiety will not last long. Every newspaper will report the non-arrival of the Calais packet; and there is no danger, the captain says."

"Poor child," he muttered half to himself; "and I would give my

life to spare her pain. That will tell them nothing," he went on aloud; "they do not know I am out of England."

I made no reply. It seemed intrusive to inquire further as I could suggest no remedy. His was indeed a hard case. After a short spell of silence, he left me and paced up and down the deck, scanning the horizon attentively from time to time. Charley settled himself for a nap. It was getting late now and the sky becoming cloudy and threatening. I heard someone say if we had rain it would bring down the wind.

It was a strange scene to my unaccustomed eyes. There we lay, helpless and inert, tossed to and fro at the mercy of the winds and waves. Not a sail was in sight; not a puff of smoke: we seemed alone in the world. I was much impressed by it. My spirits, never very buoyant, sank rapidly. Was it true, as the captain had maintained, that there was no danger? Few of us, I imagine, had so urgent a call as Captain Fortescue, but still, what terrible apprehension our non-appearance would cause in many a home. In my own case, I had little to fear. My husband was in the north of England on business, and it was doubtful if he could return in time to meet me. Besides, he was not nervous or excitable, and would probably take my unpunctuality with equanimity. Walter was never frightened at anything, I was wont to say, and though I had often chafed at his insensibility, I was thankful for it now. But what would cousin Sophy say?

I glanced at her boy, now sleeping placidly at my side. In the morning, when all was gay and bright around me, I had pictured a happy future for Charley. I was not so sure of it now. There were lines about his mouth that showed a want of reliance and self-control, perhaps of sincerity. He needed the guidance of a firm hand, and that I feared he would not find. He would be but an insecure prop for his mother to lean upon. Still he was all she had, and if any harm came to him—I could not pursue that train of thought; it was too painful. I bent over him and lifted a dark curl from his forehead. My touch, light as it was, roused him.

"Bless you, no," he said, irreverently, when I asked him if his mother would be anxious. "Don't let that trouble you. The old lady won't expect me, Mrs. Calvert; I never come to my time. I do it on principle; it saves her a deal of worry. If *I* don't turn up in time for my wedding, people will only say, 'Just like Charley.' I say, did you ever see such a thing," he went on in a lower tone as Captain Fortescue passed us; "that fellow looks as if he were going to be hanged."

I have no experience of condemned criminals, but I could not endorse this description of Captain Fortescue. That he was suffering keenly was evident. I have, I think, a smaller share of curiosity in my composition than is given to most females, still I confess I should have liked to know the story of that young man's life; he interested

me deeply. Had I questioned him, he would probably have told me much and have found relief in so doing, but that was impossible to me, and he was as reticent in his way as I in mine. I could only strive to make him forget his trouble by dwelling on indifferent topics.

But though he had such a heavy load on his heart, he was not unmindful of my comfort, and as night came on he wrapped me up carefully and put his own fur-lined cloak over my knees, saying I had nothing dry enough to keep me warm. Then he ordered supper for us, which meal I could not prevail on him to share, and showed himself full of resources, as a soldier should be. Greta—I had caught sight of the name traced in enamelled letters on a locket he wore—would have a tender, careful husband, I thought. I wished I could see her and tell her how much I appreciated his kindness. I hoped she was worthy of the affection he lavished on her. After supper, Charley ran on with a string of nonsense that, wild as it was, did succeed in bringing a smile to the young lover's lips. He had taken a fancy, as most people did, to the bright, merry-hearted lad, and did not mind his raillery—and I must own that Charley's words, provoking as they often were, were never ill-natured.

Where we were we had no idea, nor do I think had anyone on board. The captain, if he knew, was not communicative. The sailors said we were drifting northward; the morning would show where. Meanwhile, the darkness was profound; there was no moon, and our stock of oil, being very small, was not to be wasted.

It must have been past twelve o'clock when my companions rose, saying I should get no rest if they did not leave me. I was much too excited to sleep soundly in such uncomfortable surroundings, but I must have lost myself for a while for I could hardly recognise where I was when the voice of Captain Fortescue sounded close beside me.

"Mrs. Calvert, I am going," he said, hurriedly. "Charley will explain. You must let me know how you get on; here is my address. I have not a minute to spare. No, no, keep the cloak. I cannot take it from you now. Good-bye."

He put a card into my hand, and was gone. What had happened? I was only half awake, or I would have risen to follow him. I sat up and tried to clear my thoughts, but in vain.

"Wasn't it a splendid chance for him!" cried Charley as he burst into my cabin, flushed with excitement and delight. "We hadn't gone to bed, you know. Fortescue wanted me to lie down, but as he wouldn't, no more would I. It was a rare go. He kept close by the skipper, determined not to miss another chance. All of a sudden we heard a shout and a whistle, and there came alongside a little steam launch, looking like a toy next to us.

"'What's up? Who are you?' cried a voice.

"'*Samphire*, Calais and Dover packet boat,' replies our captain.

"'A little out of your course, I should say, if I may make so bold,'

the launch said satirically, and then ensued an explanation, offers of service, and so on—sort of mouse and lion business—the launch is such a dot. 'Could they put anybody ashore?' the launch asked.

"Could they? You should have seen our bridegroom. He leaned with his body half over the side, talking and shouting; then he rushed off to you, came back like a shot and leaped into the boat. He is off, and half-a-dozen more—all the launch had room to carry. I'd have liked no better fun than to have gone too," continued my young protector, with an air of importance, "only you see I had you to look after. Fortescue says he'll wire the mother and Mr. Calvert too as soon as he touches land, and tell them we are safe—it was he who thought of that. So that's all right and I'm going to bed," he concluded. "Wonder who will get in first, the *Samphire* or the cockle-shell. Good-night." And Charley, forgetting his manhood in his excitement, bestowed a kiss on me as he departed.

The cockle-shell, as it proved, won the race. It must have been nearly mid-day before a tug came to our help, and then it was sent by the owner of the launch. Some of our passengers got off at daylight on passing steamers, but I remained where I was and landed at Dover on the afternoon of the second day. I was too weary to travel to London then, so stayed for the night at the Lord Warden: as did many of the other passengers.

At Charing Cross we had quite an enthusiastic reception. Many of our fellow passengers were in the train whose friends came to meet them. Such kissing and crying as went on would have led anyone, ignorant of the circumstances, to imagine we had been in serious danger. Our party behaved better than the others. Cousin Sophy embraced her boy with exuberant delight and bore him off in triumph. My husband was certainly more demonstrative than usual, but with one of his quiet temperament that is not saying much. I put my arm within his and was about to leave the station, when we were stopped, and to my infinite surprise, I found myself shaking hands with Captain Fortescue. A very sweet-looking girl was on his arm, to whom he introduced me with a mixture of pride and shyness very pleasant to see.

"My wife, Mrs. Calvert, is very anxious to know you. We leave England to-morrow night. I am so glad to meet you again."

He had sent to inquire, so my husband told me afterwards, when I was expected in London, and, although his time in England was so short, made a point of coming to meet me. What I had done to deserve his gratitude I am at a loss to know.

"You must let us drive you home," he added; and without waiting for my reply ushered me into a carriage that was drawn up at the door of the station; and as soon as my trunks had been collected and placed on a cab, we four drove swiftly through the Park to South Kensington.

"I congratulate you most heartily," I said as soon as I could find

words. "I am so thankful you were in time. Believe me, I have often thought of you."

"I was sure you would," he said. "No one was ever so kind and sympathising. It was a very near thing, though."

"You should have seen him, Mrs. Calvert," broke in Mrs. Fortescue, who seemed as frank and communicative as her husband was reticent. "We were all assembled in church, and I was getting just a little nervous, when in rushed Allan in a grey tweed suit, all dusty and travel-stained, his hair wild, a travelling cap in his hand—oh! such a figure!—His colour was coming and going like a girl's. I was so frightened I could not speak. Mamma said, 'Oh, Allan, what is the matter; why are you not dressed?' 'Never mind,' said he, 'Greta is not going to marry my clothes. Thank Heaven, I am here. Let us get on; it is nearly twelve o'clock.'—This did not satisfy my father. 'I must know more,' he said, sternly. 'You shall as soon as the service is over,' Allan continued, and then he pulled a newspaper out of his pocket and put it into papa's hand — he always thinks of everything. 'I was on board that boat,' he added; 'you can read it if you like. Do begin, please,' this to the clergyman. I confess that when we came to the place where they ask if there is any impediment to the marriage I feared papa would interfere; and so he would he said afterwards only he does not hear very well, and being rather excited, he missed it. When all was over we went to the vestry and heard Allan's story—all he would tell us.—Do you know why he went over to France?"

"No," I replied. "I asked no questions."

"Dear Greta, never mind that now," Captain Fortescue entreated.

Greta blushed, and then with a smile went on to relate how on their way home from church they had stopped at Captain Fortescue's lodgings that he might change his dress, and this took so long that her people began to think Allan had eloped with her and was not coming to the wedding breakfast.

"Which is just what I should have liked to do," interrupted the Captain. "Is this your house, Mrs. Calvert?" he added as the carriage stopped. "Must we say good-bye, or will you let us look in again to-morrow morning? We are staying at Bailey's hotel close by."

I pressed them to come in then, but they could not stay, they were engaged. I was not sorry to have a quiet evening with my husband. We had been separated for many weeks and had much to say to one another. The morning brought my young friends again —this time to say farewell in real earnest. Greta's voice trembled as she spoke of the perils of a soldier's life, but I saw the girl had a brave heart and would not try to keep her husband from his duty.

Our interview would have been a sad one had not Charley broken in upon us, and with his never-failing spirits and lively sallies prevented our dwelling on painful subjects. He was quite smitten with young Mrs. Fortescue, and rattled on in praise of her husband

as if he had known him all his life. I sent him upstairs after awhile to fetch the fur-lined cloak, which I had neglected to restore to its owner the day before, and seizing a moment when the Captain and Mr. Calvert were at the other end of the room, Greta began in a low tone to give me a brief account of her husband's hurried journey so near his wedding-day.

"Of course it was to do a kindness," she said earnestly; "and equally of course he cannot bear to have a word said about it. One of my brothers had got into a difficulty"—a debt of honour, I suspect, but Greta did not go into details—"Allan knew my father would never forgive the boy, and off he rushed to his assistance, without letting anyone know where he had gone to. I can never be grateful enough to him," she whispered as she rose to take leave, her eyes glistening with tears.

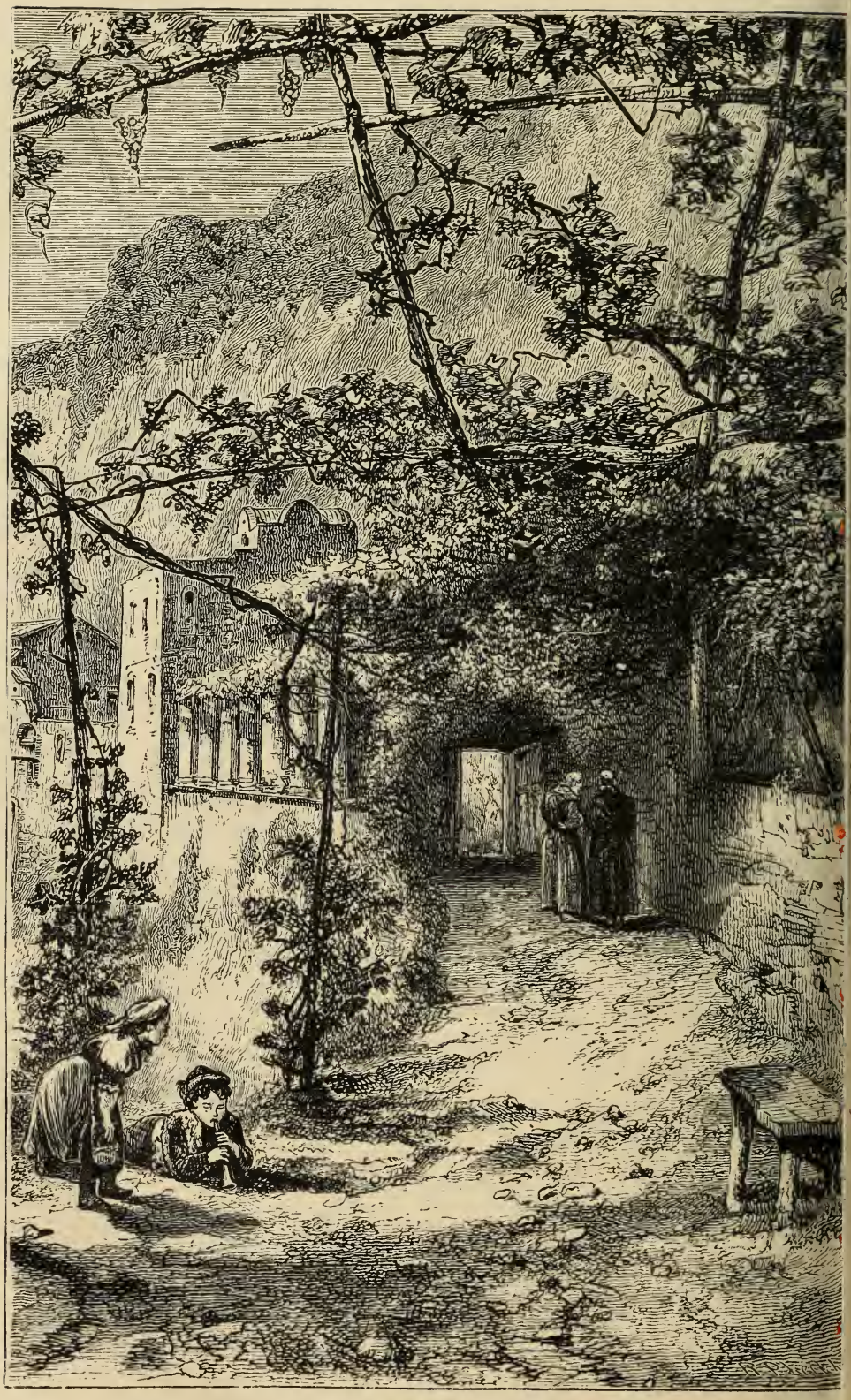
I was truly sorry to part with these young people; strangers though they were, I felt towards them quite like old friends. Of the Captain —he is Major now—I hear through the newspapers, and know him to be a brave and gallant soldier. From the same source, too, I learn they have several children; but except a Christmas card now and then there is little direct communication between us. But I know they will return to England ere long, and then we shall meet again.

"JUST BEYOND."

Upon the bosom of the stream
We idly float and idly dream;
Beyond that shadowy point may be
A fairy land for you and me!
The point is rounded—nothing there
But moonlit stream and moonlit air!

And so through life—with each new spring
Come questions—What will this year bring?
The year dies, having brought no more
Than all the years that went before.
And still, oh, foolish heart and fond,
Your fairy land lies "just beyond."

E. Nesbit



THE CANONICA.—AMALFI.

THE ARGOSY.

APRIL, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. JAMIESON PLAYS HER LAST TRUMP.

ON her way home from Ashchurch, after sending her warning telegram to Norah Canter, Vera stopped at the forge to tell Reuben that Mark had gone to Marling, and of the steps she had taken to frustrate his design.

The blacksmith left his anvil and came outside the forge to speak to his beautiful visitor; and as he stood bareheaded, with one hand resting on Firefly's shoulder, they made a group an artist would have longed to paint. Firefly was a pretty creature, and her mistress never looked better than when mounted on her; for Vera's slim, graceful figure was seen to best advantage on horseback, while the magnificent physique of the blacksmith was an excellent foil to the delicate grace of the girl. His handsome face wore an anxious, puzzled expression as he listened to Vera's story, and he glanced hastily at his watch—an article almost as large as a small warming-pan—as she finished speaking.

"I think I'll go over to Marling. There is a train at two. There is no telling what mischief Mark mayn't be up to, if he finds Janet," he said, thoughtfully.

"I don't think he will find her, though; and if he does not, to see you there would only make him surer than ever that Janet is there. He only suspects it at present; he can't know it," returned Vera.

"That's true, Miss Vera; and Norah is a match for two Mark Browns. Perhaps I'd better do nothing. She would be sure to send for me if I were wanted. I feel very anxious about Janet, though. However, I must just trust in the Lord; He can watch over her better than I. Thank you kindly, Miss Vera, for telegraphing."

"Never mind that. I shall have a letter from Norah in the morning, and I will come and tell you what she says."

As she rode off, Reuben returned to his anvil, deep in thought, and the impromptu sermons he delivered that day to his customers were unusually gloomy in character. In the evening he went to chapel, and afterwards took a Bible-class, which he held once a week. This made him rather late, and it was just nine when he began to climb the hill to his cottage.

It was a bright, starlight night, and presently he descried a figure which he recognised as Mark Brown's mounting the hill in front of him. Now, Reuben Foreman, like many other people endeavouring to live a holy life, was occasionally liable to very violent temptations; and as he followed Mark, gaining every step on him, he thought of the persecution Janet was enduring at his hands; he thought of his own loneliness, caused by this man's conduct; he thought that, for all he knew to the contrary, Mark might that day have been guilty of some terrible annoyance to his only child; and there rose up in his heart a sudden storm of passionate anger.

Why should he not, once for all, be revenged on this man? What should hinder him from seizing him and ducking him in the canal below?

What should stop him from leaving him there altogether?

"He richly deserves such a fate," whispered the devil, who was tempting Reuben. "No one will miss him, Janet will be safe, and you can have your daughter at home again."

This last was, of course, untrue, though Reuben did not know it. He did know that to seize Mark and carry him down to the canal would be mere child's play to him. He could do that to a man twice as strong as Mark without much difficulty. What an excellent opportunity, too, to be revenged on Janet's enemy!

"Surely Providence had delivered Mark into his hands," whispered the tempter again.

Reuben, mad for the moment with anger, quickened his pace. Another half minute and his hand would rest on Mark's shoulder, when a verse he had been speaking about to his class half-an-hour previously flashed into his mind. Or did his guardian angel whisper it into his ear?

"I say unto you, Love your enemies."

It mattered not to Reuben how it was brought to his recollection: all that mattered was, it was the command of his Master, and he dared not sin so flagrantly against it. He stopped short, shook himself, as though to shake off the demon which was possessing him, and, covering his face with his hands, prayed earnestly for some minutes. When he uncovered his eyes Mark was out of sight, having reached the Rectory all unconscious of the danger he had been in, though aware someone was following him. And Reuben, meek as a lamb, now went quietly up the hill to his lonely home.

The temptation though brief had been very strong, but it was over now for the time; something had hindered the blacksmith from

yielding to it. The power, the will, the opportunity all were there, but there was also "Caritas Christi," and that had hindered him. The passions of men are strong as ever in these latter days, but stronger than all passion, stronger than love, stronger than death itself is still that strange power which for nineteen centuries has ruled the noblest hearts: "Caritas Christi."

Reuben went to his forge the next day full of anxiety about Janet, and Vera's arrival, bringing with her a letter from Mrs. Canter, telling all we already know did not altogether allay his fears; for if Mark had discovered in the village that Janet was living with her aunt, she was not safe from his persecution. Later in the morning, however, Mr. Tempest's boy came to the smithy for some frost-nails, and having suffered from Mark's temper that morning, he relieved his injuries by abusing his chief to Reuben.

"He is in an awful temper to-day, and I know why, for Mary told me. It is about Miss Janet, Mr. Foreman."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean he can't find her, and don't you let him either. He went to Marling yesterday to see if she was there, but she ain't, and that is why he is so mad this morning. I hate him."

"You see that furnace—well, there is a place down below ten thousand times hotter than that, and that is where those that hate their brothers will go to," said Reuben, solemnly.

"But Mark ain't my brother," said the boy, pocketing the frost-nails, and running off before Reuben had time to explain that all men are brothers in a certain sense.

The truth was, Mark Brown, though he remained in Marling till the last train, had elicited no information about Janet from the villagers, who, however prone they might be to gossip among themselves, had no idea of taking a stranger, especially so unprepossessing a one as Mark, into their confidence. Moreover, Janet rarely went out, and was not personally known to any of the Marling people. So he returned from his excursion no wiser than he was before, and so far as he was concerned, Janet remained unmolested. Mrs. Canter duly paid a short visit to her brother, whom she thereby prevented from coming to visit his daughter, for he was a very hardworking man and rarely took a holiday: and as Norah represented, if he went to Marling, Mark would be sure to hear of it, and would draw his own conclusions. During her visit, Mrs. Canter heard plenty of gossip about the Rector and Mrs. Jamieson, but nothing definite; though as she remarked, "the chimney don't smoke when there is no fire in the grate."

It was not till the end of March that anything definite actually took place. Till then matters were in statu quo. The friendship had gone as far as friendship can go, but it had not yet developed into anything more intimate, though Mrs. Jamieson had long been of opinion that it was time Mr. Ryot Tempest should be brought to the point. She

had certainly done her part to bring him there, but though "you may take a horse to the water you can't make him drink," as the proverb says. Mr. Tempest stood with his feet on the brink of the stream, and yet showed no intention of drinking. He was thirsty, no doubt, but he would not drink.

One morning at the end of March, Mr. Tempest received a letter from Mrs. Jamieson, which caused him no little excitement. It contained the welcome news that she had just received a promise from her cousin, the bishop, of the next archdeaconry which should fall vacant for her dear and trusted friend, who she hoped would forgive her for the part she had played in the matter, but her zeal for the welfare of the established church had carried her away.

This delicate morsel of flattery was so sweet to Mr. Ryot Tempest's palate that he swallowed it without any difficulty, and congratulated himself on his good fortune in having become intimate with a woman superior enough to appreciate his excellence. Such a letter necessitated a ride over to the Grange to thank its writer, who for her part fully expected a visit.

"I mean him to do it to-day," she said to herself, just as the future archdeacon was trotting briskly up the drive, all unconscious of the work cut out for him that afternoon.

"I shall have to help him, I see. That I am prepared for; but it is for his good. An archdeacon has social duties which only a woman accustomed to society can help him to perform."

The hall-door bell just then interrupted these reflections.

"There he is. Nervousness is very infectious. I feel quite shaky. Oh, dear me! A shy man is a troublesome fish to land, but a nervous man is ten thousand times worse, for he is always expecting danger where it does not exist."

"Mr. Ryot Tempest," announced a servant; and Mr. Ryot Tempest hurried in.

"My dear friend, how can I thank you for your great kindness? Apart from all other considerations, I assure you it is very gratifying to me to find myself so appreciated."

As Mr. Tempest was thus delivering himself he was holding one of Mrs. Jamieson's hands. He shook it, he pressed it, he patted it, he squeezed it; but still the hand remained in his, and showed no inclination to remove itself, and he wondered what more he could do to it, when, in sheer desperation, it occurred to him to kiss it. This he also did without rebuke; and then, frightened at his own boldness, he dropped it as if it had burnt him.

"Stupid man!" thought Mrs. Jamieson. "Why won't he see it is his for the asking? I must turn on the flattery tap again."

This she proceeded to do, and discoursed sweetly for the next ten minutes on the great gain to the Church if so accomplished a scholar were to succeed the present Archdeacon, an old and in no way a remarkable man. Mr. Ryot Tempest thoroughly appreciated this

style of conversation, and felt pleasantly elated in consequence. He also felt Mrs. Jamieson's charms more strongly than he had ever done; but he showed no inclination to put that question she was determined he should put before he left.

"What am I to do with him?" thought Mrs. Jamieson, in despair. "I would try tears, if I thought they would be of any use. I must sail closer to the wind this time."

"The only drawback is, I am afraid you will find the social duties rather arduous," she said aloud.

"Indeed, I had not thought of that," said Mr. Tempest, nervously.

"I fear so. You see, you will be obliged to entertain the clergy. You must give clerical luncheons and dinners sometimes; and Vera is too young, and, I should say, too inexperienced to relieve you of all trouble about them. You want merely to enjoy them without having any anxiety."

"True, my dear friend; but I—I really don't see my way to that at all. I almost think it will preclude my accepting the office."

"Oh! I won't hear of your refusing it," said Mrs. Jamieson, quickly. "Now for it," she added to herself.

"If I can be of any assistance, I would; I would do anything in my power. Is there any way you can think of in which I can help you?" she said in a low voice, with a very self-conscious air.

"I really can't speak plainer," she thought; while Mr. Ryot Tempest answered, nervously:

"Thanks, no, you are too kind; but, honestly, I don't quite see my way in the matter. This phase of the office had not occurred to me," continued Mr. Tempest, who apparently did not agree with the Talmud saying that "Hospitality is an expression of Divine worship."

"But you see the necessity for it?" said Mrs. Jamieson, now at her wits' end to achieve her object, when her victim unconsciously came to her assistance.

"I do, indeed; but there is another consideration. I doubt if my means will be sufficient. I am not rich," said the victim.

"I am," said Mrs. Jamieson.

It was her last trump, but she was in doubt what to do, and the maxim, "When in doubt play a trump," occurred to her. It was bad whist, but in this case, at least, it was good policy.

There was no room for doubt as to her meaning, blind as Mr. Ryot Tempest had hitherto been. He saw now what she meant.

It was not the first time the idea of making her his wife had occurred to him by any means. He liked her, he admired her; he was not blind to the fact that she was rich as well as charming; but, to do him justice, the thought of Vera had hitherto prevented him from seriously contemplating a second marriage. But now the idea had evidently occurred to Mrs. Jamieson also. Perhaps he had been leading her to suppose his intentions were matrimonial. At any rate, it suddenly flashed upon him he had gone too far to retract. In the

excitement those two little words "I am" caused him, he forgot Vera; he forgot his dead wife for the time. All he thought of was this handsome widow, in her silk and crape, sitting close to him, with one hand now laid on the elbow of his chair, practically offering him herself and her fortune.

He took the hand up in his, and, bending forward, asked shyly:

"Is it mine?"

Mrs. Jamieson's reply, if she made one, was inaudible, though there is not the slightest doubt she was equal to the occasion. She did not attempt to withdraw her hand, though with the reader's permission, we will not follow her example, but will now withdraw ourselves from the presence of this middle-aged couple out of respect to their years. What further indiscretions the two may have been guilty of shall remain their secret.

It was late in the afternoon before Mr. Ryot Tempest found himself again on his pony, and then, as he jogged along, two thoughts chased each other through his brain.

The one: "A magnificent woman."

The other: "What will Vera say?"

What indeed?

CHAPTER XI.

ANNOUNCES A BIRTH AND A MARRIAGE.

Mrs. Canter was no doubt a good laundress, and as her customers would bear witness, had a talent for ironing starched things: but her real genius lay, in her own opinion, in another profession: that of monthly nursing. This occupation being incompatible with her duties as a mother, she was unable to follow it, but as the prospect of nursing Janet drew near, Mrs. Canter's spirits rose daily. There was, of course, nothing to prevent her from acting in her favourite capacity to Janet, though she felt some slight slur was cast on her skill when Rex wrote and insisted on a doctor being called in. It must be done, of course, since Rex wished it; but law! what should a young gentleman like him know about such things?

So it came to pass that one evening early in April the doctor was duly sent for, but to Mrs. Canter's intense delight and triumph the baby was in too great a hurry to enter the world to wait for that gentleman's tardy arrival; and when he came some time in the small hours, the baby was washed and dressed and sleeping quietly by its mother's side.

"There he is, sir, a gentleman every inch of him, bless his little heart; as straight as a dart and not a fault to find with him; with his father's own eyes, and as fine a child as ever was seen," said Mrs. Canter, her excitement overpowering her discretion, though

fortunately for Janet the doctor evinced no curiosity as to who the happy father of this youthful prodigy might be.

For the next fortnight the laundress element in Mrs. Canter's nature was in abeyance, whilst that of the monthly nurse held full sway. Her holy of holies was transferred from the laundry to Janet's room; her vestments were changed for a light print dress and a large white cambric apron, with bib and frills; a white muslin cap adorned her head; instead of pattens, noiseless slippers covered her feet. The cradle was the shrine before which a great portion of her time was spent. Twice a day, morning and evening, the most solemn rites of baby-worship were celebrated. A flannel apron replaced the cambric one, and amid sundry cooings and wailings on the part of the victim, and incoherent babblings on the part of his priestess, the infant was duly washed and dressed. To witness this interesting function was, in their mother's opinion, the greatest honour and treat it was in her power to bestow on any of her own offspring; to be deprived of that sight, the greatest punishment.

Indeed, the little Canters were having very festive times during Janet's illness. Even on Mondays Mrs. Canter beamed on every-one she saw; her temper was smooth as glass, her spirits excellent; her washerwomen very nearly satisfied her; her ironers were criticised leniently. In short, the advent of this remarkable baby changed the Canter household for the time being into a small paradise of peace and love.

Sleep on, little baby, for the time is very near when you will bring trouble and shame and sorrow, such as few are called to bear, on more than one person.

When the baby was three weeks old, Mrs. Canter received a letter from Reuben, saying he was feeling so ill that he felt obliged to ask Janet to come home and see after him, and if Mark Brown gave him any more trouble, he had made up his mind to take the law into his own hands, and horsewhip him.

Here was a pretty dilemma. It was clearly Janet's duty to go to her father. It was equally clear that for another week, at least, this was impossible. And even then, if Janet were well enough to go, what about the baby?

Every letter Rex wrote he urged secrecy with regard to his marriage, and he could not be made to see that the expected baby need increase the difficulty. On the contrary, his view was that the baby would simplify matters, for Norah could take care of it and enable Janet to return to her father.

But Janet, obedient enough up to a certain point, was not to be persuaded to bring her baby up by hand, or to be separated from it, even for her father and husband's sake. There was a limit to her wifely submission which was bounded by her duty to her child.

Mrs. Canter supported her in this resolve, having very decided views of her own on the subject.

"There are mothers in the world such grand ladies that they think they know better than Providence how to nourish their little ones; mothers with far less feeling than a dumb animal; mothers that aren't to be named in the same day as a hen, to say nothing of a cow," she was wont to declare.

After much consideration Mrs. Canter decided to say nothing to Janet for the present about her father's illness, but wrote to Reuben saying Janet was ill in bed with a bad cold—Oh! Mrs. Canter!—but would, she hoped, be well enough to go to him in ten days' time, if he then wanted her.

Having despatched Mary Jane to the post with this letter, Mrs. Canter proceeded to celebrate her morning rites; in other words, to dress the baby.

"Janet," she said, as the baby, innocent of any clothing, lay on her lap, while, with one of her enormous arms bare to the shoulder, she tested the heat of the water destined for the baby's bath: "Janet, I can't think why you don't tell your father of your marriage in spite of Master Rex. The sight of this blessed infant would move the heart of a stone."

The blessed infant, held up high in Mrs. Canter's arms so that his feet touched her face as she leant back in her chair, failed to move his mother's heart, in spite of his perfections.

"No, Aunt Norah, I can't. I gave my word not to tell till Rex gave me leave, and I'll keep my word if I have to die for it."

"Don't talk of dying, Janet, with a baby like this to bring up," said Mrs. Canter, who was now engaged in soaping this same baby's mottled body all over.

"If Miss Vera likes to tell father, she can. She'll know it in a day or two."

"Miss Vera has troubles enough of her own without having to share yours and Master Rex's," said Mrs. Canter, as she transferred the baby from her lap to its bath. "What he wanted to tell her for beats me. But there! men are poor things. They can't bear trouble; and as for pain, they don't know what it is."

The baby uttered a shrill protest on behalf of his sex to this last observation, as the operation of sponging, technically alluded to by Mrs. Canter as "sluicing," now began. "Sluicing" was apparently fraught with discomfort if not with pain to the victim, for he screamed lustily till it was over.

"There, then; did it cry, then?"

It certainly did, so the question was superfluous. But Mrs. Canter lapsed into baby-talk, finding Janet was obstinate, and continued to dilate on the various perfections of the baby, and to maintain that he was a man of mettle, and a gentleman, and a king, and a prince, until the toilet of the youthful owner of all these exceedingly inappropriate titles was finished.

Her mind then reverted to Vera, and she began to wonder how

her young lady was getting on, for she had not yet heard of Mr. Ryot Tempest's engagement.

That gentleman was by no means in a hurry to communicate the news to his daughter, and, as not infrequently happens in these cases, Vera was one of the last people to hear of it, though one of the most interested. It was nearly three weeks after the engagement had taken place that Mr. Ryot Tempest, urged by Mrs. Jamieson, announced it to his daughter. He would not have done it then, probably, only he had discovered that his fiancée had a will of her own, and he dimly suspected a temper; and being wise in his generation, of the two ladies he preferred to offend Vera.

Having invited the latter into his study one morning, he proceeded to break the news to her; but inwardly trembling, he set to work in a roundabout way.

"Vera, my dear child, I have been thinking you want a little change; you are looking pale."

"I am quite well," said Vera with a sigh.

"Still, I think a change advisable," persisted the Rector.

"I can't leave you alone, papa; it would be very dull for you," said Vera.

Mr. Tempest coughed and coloured and hacked and stammered as he observed:

"I—I, the fact is, I am—I was thinking of going away myself after Easter, in—in May."

"That is nearly three weeks hence. Where shall we go?" said Vera, who had no objection to a change.

"Well, I think, my dear, you had better go to your Uncle George."

"We are not to go together, then?" asked Vera in surprise.

"No. I—no, on the whole, I think not."

"Why, where are you going all alone, papa?"

"I am not going anywhere alone."

"Who is going with you, then?" asked Vera, her curiosity aroused, though not a suspicion of the truth had yet entered her mind.

Mr. Ryot Tempest did not answer, and Vera suddenly guessing he might be going to visit her mother's grave, said gently:

"Are you going to Avranches, papa? If so, please let me go with you." And she moved closer to him and leant her hand on the back of his chair.

Mr. Ryot Tempest's conscience smote him; the allusion to his wife's grave was in itself painful. Moreover, the girl looked so sweet as she stood by his side, her beautiful face, pale, and just now sad, turned to his. The news he had to tell would make it paler and sadder. He felt he must give her pain; there was no alternative; so he took one of her hands in his and with a great effort, said:

"Vera, my darling——" Then he paused.

He had never called her darling before—that Vera remembered. But before she had recovered from this outburst of affection, Mr. Tempest continued:

"I am going to be married."

If he had struck her to the ground, Vera could not have been more amazed than she was at this piece of news. She withdrew her hand, but not roughly, and turning to the chimney-piece she caught hold of it, and bowing her head against the hand that grasped it, said, when she could speak:

"So soon?"

Not another syllable of reproach did Mr. Ryot Tempest ever hear from her. That rebuke—and it cut him to the quick—was wrung from her in the first moment of her agony, for it seemed to Vera that this was the hardest trial she had yet been called upon to bear. She might have suppressed it, no doubt, but it seemed to her that she owed that protest to her darling mother's memory.

"It is sooner than I should have wished, but there are reasons why it is expedient; the archdeacon is dying, and I am to succeed him," said Mr. Ryot Tempest, hoping this information would somewhat console his daughter for having a step-mother thrust upon her.

But Vera did not even hear him, or at least she did not grasp the sense of his words.

"Who is it, father?" she asked after a long pause, during which Mr. Tempest wished she would rebel and say something that would give him an excuse for ordering her out of the room, instead of taking it so meekly.

"Mrs. Jamieson, my dear."

Vera gave a little cry like that of a wounded animal, but still she said not a word, and Mr. Ryot Tempest proceeded nervously to enlarge on Mrs. Jamieson's perfections.

"She is a most charming woman, shrewd, clever, handsome; in short, everything that can be desired; a fine fortune, and a magnificent figure."

Vera made no reply to this; she had formed her own estimate of Mrs. Jamieson's character, but she judged it wiser to keep it to herself.

"I hope it will be for your happiness, father," she said presently, and then she slipped quietly out of the study, and running upstairs locked herself in her own room, where she indulged in an outburst of passionate weeping.

The next three weeks were very unhappy ones for Vera. She was obliged to see Mrs. Jamieson several times, and to bear that lady's friendly advances as patiently as she could; but she was forced to acknowledge her father was right: Mrs. Jamieson was certainly a fascinating woman, though all the same Vera did not like her. She felt she could never trust her, and she had a very shrewd idea her father would some day find he had made a mistake, but that would not be till it was too late.

Then there were certain arrangements for the approaching marriage, which was fixed for the third week in May, and these were gall and wormwood to Vera, who nevertheless had to submit to them, and did so with as good a grace as she could summon. Indeed, throughout Mr. Ryot Tempest's engagement she behaved in an exemplary manner, and he little guessed what a bitter trial his second marriage was to her. It was a possibility which had never occurred to Vera as likely to arise, so the surprise had been as great as the grief it caused her. If it had not been so soon after her mother's death she could have borne it better; particularly as in that case she hoped to be married herself, and a step-mother would not affect her happiness. But now she had a year at least to live at home, and though it might pass quickly, it seemed a long time to look forward to spending with an uncongenial companion.

Her twentieth birthday occurred in the beginning of the month, and to her delight she received a box of flowers from Captain Raleigh, which Mr. Tempest allowed her to accept, though he would not let her acknowledge them.

The wedding was fixed for the sixteenth of May, and it was arranged that Vera should leave home on the fifteenth, as she was not to be present at the marriage; and for a few days before she left she was busy in the parish, visiting the poor people to bid them good-bye. On going to Reuben Foreman's cottage, to her surprise she found him at home suffering from what seemed to be a feverish cold, but he was so unwell, that a day or two before she left home, Vera, without telling Reuben, wrote to Janet advising her to come home at once.

The next day, the fourteenth, she received a letter from Rex, which completely upset her, for it announced his marriage with Janet Foreman, and hinted that by the time Vera received it, he would in all probability be a father. He implored his sister to keep his secret for the present, and to do all she could for Janet; and in return for a favour he knew Vera would grant, he had written by the same mail to his father, begging him to give his consent to her marriage with Captain Raleigh.

This news completely staggered Vera, for much as she admired and liked Janet, she could not think her a suitable wife for Rex, who, in her opinion, was second to only one man on earth; namely, Captain Raleigh.

All that day, busy as she was, the news haunted her. Should she tell Reuben? It was impossible to keep it from him much longer if Janet were really a mother, but it was not a pleasant piece of information for her to deliver, and she could not make up her mind to do so, at any rate until she had slept upon it. She was on enter-hooks all day lest her father should ask to see his son's letter, which she burnt in case this should happen; but, fortunately, Mr. Ryot Tempest was too much occupied with his own affairs to think of anything else. At night Vera went to bed over-tired and with a

busy brain, which would not let her rest, but would keep suggesting various courses of action with regard to Rex and Janet. At last, worn out with worry and fatigue, she fell asleep.

Vera was not the only wakeful person in the Rectory that night: Mark Brown also tossed and turned on his bed, for he had heard of Reuben's illness, and he felt sure Janet would come home in a day or two at latest, to nurse him; and the prospect of seeing her kept Mark awake.

CHAPTER XII.

REUBEN IS TEMPTED.

THE blacksmith, who was as helpless and nervous as most men when ill, missed Vera's visit on the day she received Rex's letter; and, feeling worse, he decided to write and beg Janet to come home and look after him. Letter-writing was not one of the blacksmith's strong points. He wielded the hammer better than he did the pen; so the smudged, ill-spelt epistle, written with a splitting headache and a split pen, which, after much exertion, he finally despatched, was sufficiently vague to alarm Janet seriously.

It was ironing-day—that is to say Thursday, as the world counts time—when this letter reached Janet. She was quite well now, and was sitting by the kitchen fire with "the man of mettle," ætat one month and a few days, on her lap, when Mary Jane handed two letters to her: Reuben's and Vera's.

"Is it from him?" said Norah, who was about to begin the work to which Thursday was consecrated. She alluded to Rex, for they were anxiously awaiting a letter from him in answer to the one announcing the birth of his son—a letter they hoped would give Janet permission to tell her father of her marriage; for until she received this permission she dared not and would not do so.

"No; they are from Miss Vera and father. Oh! Aunt Norah, he is very ill, and wants me to go home at once. What am I to do? Of course I must go, but what about baby? I dare not leave him."

"No, you can't do that. It is as much as his little life is worth. And you can't refuse to go to your father, though I don't suppose there is much the matter with him. All men think they are going to die if they have a bad cold. There is only one thing to be done: you must go, and you must tell him the truth, and take the child, bless his little heart, with you."

And here Mrs. Canter lapsed into baby-language as she knelt by Janet's knees, and paused in her occupation of testing the heat of a flat-iron to charm a smile from the little creature who, all unconscious of the difficulty into which its existence plunged its mother, lay cooing and gurgling on her knee.

The joy and suffering of the last year had told upon Janet. She was a trifle thinner and paler than she was wont to be, but her beauty had gained by the change the very thing it had always lacked to make it perfect—expression. The shadow her husband's absence cast over her life brought out the light of love into high relief: a light which makes even a plain face lovely; and the resolution she suddenly formed to sacrifice her best possession, even her good name, for her husband's sake, and out of obedience to him, gave a grandeur to her face which startled Mrs. Canter.

"I shall go and I shall take baby, but I shall tell no one I am married till Rex gives me leave to do so," she said, with a decision Norah had not thought her capable of.

"Janet, you must be mad! Here you are supposed to be married, and everyone believes you are Mrs. Foreman, whose husband is in America; but at Woodford the truth must be known."

"When Rex gives me leave it will be known; not until then. It may be only a few days that I shall have to wait; till then no one but father need know about baby; and, if he is in bed, even he need not know it. Baby rarely cries, and father sleeps downstairs. As for the neighbours, our cottage is so lonely I could keep the child there for weeks without their knowing anything; and, if necessary, I must do it. I must obey father and go home, but I can't disobey my husband."

Mrs. Canter knew it was useless to argue, but she scorched a shirt in her surprise and vexation.

"When are you going?" was all she said.

"This afternoon, so that I don't arrive until after dark," said Janet; and that afternoon she went.

Reuben, who had expected her to arrive by an earlier train, was disappointed and depressed at finding she had not come as soon as he received his letter; and, having given up all hope of seeing her that day, was as pleased as he was surprised when, at about nine o'clock, he heard her step in the front room of his cottage.

"Is that you, Janet?" he called from the inner room, where he lay in bed reading his Bible by the light of a lamp.

The front room was in darkness, and Janet having laid the sleeping infant safely in her father's arm-chair, went in to see him.

"Yes, father dear, here I am at last. How are you?" said Janet anxiously, as she bent over the bed and kissed her father.

"I am ill, Janet. It may be only a bad cold, but maybe I am in for a long illness; anyhow, I am very glad you are back to look after me. It has been very dull all this winter without you, my lass, and you don't look much the better for the change; but perhaps it is only the lamp-light makes you look pale and careworn."

"I am tired, father; I will just go upstairs and take off my hat and then get some supper," said Janet, who was in mortal terror lest the baby should wake and cry, and thus betray its presence.

She said truly when she said she was tired; but she was sick at heart also. Her father was ill she could see, and she longed to tell him everything, and ask his forgiveness for the way in which she had deceived him. But this she dared not do for Rex's sake, so she took the baby upstairs and put it into her own little bed, which, ill as he was, Reuben had made for her: a little sign of affection which pierced poor Janet's penitent heart like a sword, and it was with difficulty that she gulped down her tears. A very brief glance sufficed to show Janet it was more than time she returned home, for although Reuben paid a neighbour to clean the cottage once or twice a week, many things were neglected, and there was no suggestion of those little home comforts which only a loving woman can supply.

Tired as she was, Janet soon had a bowl of hot gruel ready for her father, and made his bed and room more comfortable before she got some supper for herself. Then she offered to sit up with him, meaning to pay stolen visits to her baby when Reuben was asleep. But this the blacksmith would not hear of; he was not ill enough. Indeed, he declared Janet's return had already done him good, and he had little doubt he would be able to go to the forge again in a day or two.

Accordingly, Janet went to bed, and very glad she was to get there; not only because of her fatigue, but also because there was far less risk of the baby crying if she were with it; and by eleven o'clock the little household was fast asleep. Reuben was restless and woke before midnight feeling hot and feverish. He tossed about from side to side, when suddenly the wail of an infant in the room overhead broke the stillness of the night, and roused a terrible fear in the blacksmith's mind. Reuben started up in bed and listened intently. Yes, there was no doubt about it. Once again he heard that feeble cry which this time died away, evidently soothed by Janet.

A cold sweat stood on Reuben's brow as he listened acutely for a repetition of that terrible wail. Terrible because it told him his name was dishonoured, Janet's fair fame tarnished, the pride and joy of his life laid low in the dust, his spotless lily broken off from the parent plant, kissing the earth, his daughter—— But hush! no, even in the delirium of his anger, in the first shock of the awful grief that infant's cry brought to his heart, dared Reuben apply the worst which rose to his lips to Janet. It was impossible; he must have been dreaming; he would try and go to sleep and forget it, and in the morning he and Janet would laugh over it.

Alas! in the morning neither he nor Janet laughed. But sleep Reuben could not; that cry still rang in his ears. Again and again though all was now silent as the grave, that cry told him his heart was broken. He had made no mistake; it was no delirium, no dream, no vision of the night; it was stern, sober fact; a wicked fact, a cruel fact, a cursed fact. Sin had knocked at the door of his house, which

he prided himself was so free from sin, had found admission, had done its work and left its sting behind for all the world to scoff at.

Scarcely knowing what he did, Reuben rose from his bed, put on his clothes, and taking the lamp in his hand, crept upstairs with bare feet to Janet's room. The room was small and the roof so low that a giant like Reuben could not stand upright in it; and the blacksmith with head bent, feeling that if his fears were realised he would never again be able to raise his head in the presence of men, stole noiselessly across the bare boards, shading the lamp with one hand, to the bed where Janet lay.

Alas! it was true; it was not a dream. There lay the young mother sound asleep, her lips gently parted, her golden hair thrown up in a heap above her head, a slight flush on her cheeks; and there by her side, one of her fair white arms embracing it, lay the baby wrapped in flannel, one tiny hand grasping its mother's night-dress. A fairer sight one would scarce wish to look upon; and yet Reuben, trembling in every limb, as he gazed with blanched cheeks upon it, felt he would ten thousand times rather have seen Janet in her grave.

And now, ye angels; who stand with folded wings beside that innocent mother and still more innocent child—shield them; for a sudden fierce anger rose in the heart of the unhappy father as he looked on what he thought to be his daughter's shame; and he raised that mighty fist of his, one blow of which would have slain both mother and child, as though to smite them both. And then he paused; and after a few moments his raised hand fell harmlessly to his side, and he turned and left the room.

He went downstairs into the kitchen, set the lamp on the table, and sank into his arm-chair in the chimney-corner, his elbows propped up on his knees, his face buried in his hands. It was a favourite attitude of his, both in chapel and when praying in his own house; but Reuben was not engaged in prayer now. It was the darkest hour of his life. Satan was considering him, and his grief was very great. The words of Job, whose book he had been reading that evening, rang in his ears: "Let the day perish wherein I was born. Let them curse it that curse the day, for I am as one mocked of his neighbour. The just, upright man is laughed to scorn."

Ah! There lay the sting. "The just, upright man is laughed to scorn." He, Reuben Foreman, just and upright in his own eyes, in the eyes of his neighbours, in the eyes of his friends, aye, in the eyes of his enemies, he was laughed to scorn. Henceforth the finger of scorn would be pointed at him. Numbers whom he scorned in his pride would cast stones at Janet, his beautiful Janet, the apple of his eye, the pride of his life.

No! never should that happen. The Devil, ever ready with suggestions of evil, whispered a way to silence all gossiping tongues. No one knew of Janet's shame but himself, and he supposed, Norah,

who was clever enough to hush the matter up; no one should know of it. A way had suggested itself; or rather Satan had suggested a way; as the blacksmith sat with bowed head at the empty grate; a way which would not be difficult in Reuben's present mood. And he rose from his chair to accomplish it.

Better for him had he died in that chair perhaps, for the deed he contemplated was a ghastly one. He rose from his seat, comparatively speaking, an innocent man; if he accomplished his fell purpose, he would return to it a criminal worthy of death. He shivered as he rose. But it was not only cold that made him shiver, though he thought it was, and put on a warm fustian coat to cure his chilliness. Then he lowered the lamp and crept upstairs again.

Mother and child still slept, and with feverish hands and bated breath, Reuben lifted the child from Janet's arms without waking her, for she was tired and slept soundly. The infant gave a faint cry, and then snuggled up against the fustian coat, and its gentle breathing told that it also slept.

Like a thief in the night, Reuben stole downstairs with the child and the lamp. In the kitchen he saw a shawl of Janet's hanging on the door, and he wrapped the baby in it and laid it in his chair while he put on his boots. This done, he put on his hat, took up the sleeping infant, turned out the lamp, and unlocking the door, went out into the night, locking the door behind him and putting the key in his pocket.

His goal was a mill-pool in the valley below; the river was too shallow for his purpose, but the mill-pool was deep and dark and silent; it told no tales. Cradled in that, the infant he held in his arms would sleep with no fear of awakening. There it could bring no shame to its mother, no scorn on its grandfather. Down in those blue depths of the indigo-dyed water the babe would sleep soundly enough, pillowed on the soft mud.

That the waters would henceforth be dyed with blood, the blood of an innocent babe, instead of with indigo, did not occur to Reuben. All he thought of, as he strode down the steep, rough path, was his folly in not having suspected the reason of Janet's long absence. It was clear enough now. How blind he had been not to guess before; but he had trusted Janet implicitly; and as little as he suspected her would he have suspected his sister, who was evidently in league with Janet. And then he wondered who was the father of the child he held in his arm; and then, thinking of Norah, he guessed, and he guessed right.

He was passing the Rectory grounds when this flashed upon him, and, as he glanced over the stone wall which separated the lane he was in from the garden, he gnashed his teeth and muttered a curse on the house and its inmates.

He was not far from his destination, for the Rectory grounds stretched down to the valley, and almost immediately below the lower

gate was the mill-pool in which he meant to drown the infant. A grim satisfaction that the child should meet its death so close to the home of its father filled the blacksmith's mind as he came to the bottom of the hill. A few hundred yards further he walked, and then he stood by the mill-pool, on whose blue waters the moon was shining so brightly that the mill at the head of the pool was reflected in them.

A dark, stormy night, when the wind howls and uncanny noises fill the air, would have been better for such a crime as Reuben Foreman contemplated; but nature refused to countenance so unnatural a deed, and the moon shone out in all her splendour till the night was almost as light as the day: and Reuben would have shrank from committing such a sin in the blaze of the noon-day sun. As he paused by the brink of the pool, he considered. Should he throw it into the water alive, or should he kill it first? Which was the more merciful? Drowning was a painless death, people said; but the water was very cold, and the child he held was as warm as a toast. It would probably scream before it sank, whereas one grip of that iron arm which held it would be enough to squeeze the life out of it, and he would take care no sound escaped to betray him.

When Reuben looked back on this scene of his life—as he did very often in after years—he always came to the conclusion that he must have been suffering from a fit of temporary insanity. No sane man, he thought, could have contemplated such an action in so cold-blooded a manner.

Before he decided to give the child that cruel embrace, he stooped to look at it. He opened the shawl and head-flannel in which it was muffled, and, when he did so, the little creature opened one of its tiny fists and clasped its soft, wee, tender baby fingers round the blacksmith's great hard iron thumb, and with its other hand grasped his beard, and nestled its little head lovingly against his fustian coat. And the watching angels wept for joy, and the blacksmith's heart was softened, and he could not do that dreadful deed.

Just then he heard the click of a latch, and, looking up, he saw coming out of the Rectory gate, about fifty yards off, Vera Tempest, dressed in a long pale blue dressing-gown, her long hair rippling down her shoulders, and stretching far below her waist. At first he thought he saw a vision; but a second glance told him it was Vera, and that she was asleep, and that a fearful death threatened her. A few more steps, and, unless she changed her course, she would walk straight into the mill-pool, for which she seemed to be making.

Quick as thought, Reuben, who knew every inch of the ground, darted to a hollow tree, about twenty yards from the pool, and there he laid the baby gently down. It would be quite safe there till he had taken Miss Tempest home, and then he would return for it. He tore off his coat and made a bed of it for the child, and then he sprang across the grass and planted himself like an iron bulwark

on the edge of the pool facing Vera, who in a few more steps would hav walked straight into it.

Her white hands were clasped in front of her, her great dark eye were open, but Reuben knew by their vacant expression that the saw nothing; the pretty pencilled eyebrows were knit as though i perplexity. Yes, she was dreaming, and the dream was troubled. T wake her the blacksmith knew was dangerous; to attempt to alter he course without doing so was impossible; to let her go on was certair death. Fortunately he and Vera were very good friends; she hac been very kind to him during Janet's absence, and had visited hir every day since he had been ill until the day that was just past. Tha day, as we know, he had not seen her, somewhat to his surprise, fo she had promised to come. Knowing him so well, he trusted she would not be so frightened as if some stranger woke her; though t wake up and find herself by the mill-pool face to face with the village blacksmith in the middle of the night would be sufficiently alarming even to a brave girl like Vera.

All this flashed through Reuben's mind quicker than it takes t tell, for in less than two minutes from the time he heard the click o the Rectory gate, he had laid one of his great iron hands—thank God still unstained with blood—on Vera's little white ones and pushed her gently back from her perilous position.

Vera gave a slight cry, shivered, started back, snatched her hands from that strong grasp and pressed them to her temples, exclaiming:

"Where am I? Where am I? The mill-pool just outside the lower gate? I must save him! Oh! Reuben Foreman, where am I?" and then she burst into a fit of hysterical weeping.

"Don't you be afraid, Miss Vera, you are only walking in your sleep; you have been dreaming; you are quite safe now if you make haste home so that you don't catch cold. Let me help you back," said Reuben, whose thoughts, now that Vera was safe, reverted to the baby, which might wake at any moment and announce its presence by crying; and then his shame would be known.

"Was I dreaming? It was a very vivid dream about Rex and the mill-pool. It must have been that letter I had to-day which troubled me so that made me walk; I have not done it since I was a child. Come home with me please, Reuben. I feel rather shaky; and I have something to tell you I may as well tell you now, and then it won't trouble me any more. I wish I had done it yesterday, and then I should not have walked in my sleep again; but I put it off till you were better. But that reminds me, Reuben. Why are you here, and without a coat, in the middle of the night, when you are so ill? Am I really awake? It is all so strange." And Vera paused at the gate they had just reached, and rubbed her eyes and shook back her beautiful hair and looked up at the blacksmith's pale face.

"Yes, Miss Tempest, you are awake now. I could not sleep for

trouble; and it is lucky for you I could not, or you would be lying in the mill-pool. It is a very dangerous habit is sleep-walking," said Reuben, as they hastened up the drive.

"I know it is, but don't tell anyone, please, Reuben; I have not done it for so long, and I daresay I shall never do it again. It was all Rex's letter, and not knowing what I ought to do about it. Is Janet home?" said Vera, abruptly.

"Yes, Miss Vera," replied Reuben.

"Then you know about her?" said Vera, interrogatively.

"I know she is not fit to speak to you, Miss Vera, and that she has broken her father's heart," said the blacksmith, slowly and sadly.

"What, Janet? Why, Reuben, she is my sister, she is Rex's wife, you know. He married her before he went away, in London, from Norah's house."

"What? Mr. Rex's wife. My Janet Mr. Rex's wife? Say it again, Miss Vera; for the love of Heaven say it again!" And to Vera's amazement, Reuben flung himself on his knees at her feet, and held his clasped hands up to her in an agony of mingled joy and penitence.

"Reuben, get up; you are very ill, I am sure. It is all true that I tell you, but we must keep it a secret for a few days longer; to-morrow I will come and tell you why. Janet is Rex's wife; Norah knows all about it. And now go home, Reuben, and go to bed. I am quite awake now and quite safe. I shall get in quietly without waking anyone, and no one but you will be the wiser for this night's adventure. Good-night, Reuben. I shall not forget you saved my life, but you must not come a step further with me. Promise me you will go home quickly; I am sure you ought not to be here."

"You are right there, Miss Vera; I will go. God bless you for what you have told me." And Reuben, who scarcely knew what he was doing, turned away, while Vera, gathering her trailing skirt up, ran swiftly into the house.

Reuben only walked a few steps, and then in an agony of shame, remorse, joy, and gratitude, he threw himself face forward full length on the damp grass, and wept and prayed aloud. His feelings were so complex that he could not analyse them. Perhaps the one consistent thought which ran through them was that he came out to destroy a life, and by God's great mercy he had been permitted to save one. God's hand was upon him, but in love not in anger; it was the weight of His love and His mercy that stretched the blacksmith at His feet and crushed him down in penitence to the earth. His mercy was more than he could bear. Humbled to the very dust, Reuben saw himself for the first time in his life as he really was: not the righteous man he thought himself, not the zealous searcher after other men's souls, not the pillar of the chapel, but a weak, sinful

man, who but for God's restraining hand would that night have been guilty of murder.

And Janet, whom he had so cruelly misjudged, was still his innocent Janet. She had erred, but not as he had feared; she had deceived him, but not as he had suspected. She was the wife of a gentleman. Instead of being ashamed of her he had reason to be proud of her, for she had attained a position that in his wildest moments he had never dreamt of; nor to do him justice had he ever desired.

That Mr. Reginald Tempest was the father of the child he had guessed on his way down to the mill-pool, when that awful temptation was driving him to take an innocent life and lose his own soul; but that he was also the husband of Janet was news as welcome as it was startling. Even if Janet had been guilty—as he had suspected—how could he ever have faced her if her baby, by his act, were now lying dead in the mill-pool? But now that he knew she was innocent, Reuben thought if he had been mad enough to commit that awful deed there would have been no place of repentance left for him. He must have fallen a victim to despair—the blue waters of that pool would have closed over another life that night.

But when he thought this, Reuben was scarcely answerable for his reflections. His brain, already excited by fever, was still more excited by the events of the night; his head felt like a ball of fire; his limbs were aching so that he hardly knew how to rise from the damp ground; the prayers he ejaculated were wild and incoherent. He felt he was much more ill than he knew; his great frame trembled like an aspen, and it was with difficulty he pulled himself together and made his way back to the tree where he had left the sleeping infant.

His one thought now was to get it home safely and place it in its mother's arms before she awoke and missed it. No one then need know the awful struggle he had been through that night, the terrible temptation he had undergone, the dreadful crime he had so nearly committed. Through all the tangled thoughts that were troubling Reuben's brains this fixed idea now ran; to it his will was bent; accomplish it he must or perish in the attempt—namely, get the infant safely back to Janet before she awoke.

With this purpose in his burning, aching head, he dragged his weary limbs back to the tree; but to his horror, when he reached it the hollow trunk was empty—the baby was gone!

Reuben gave one agonised cry and fell senseless to the ground.

(To be continued.)

ADELAIDE RISTORI.

SOME great men and women have grown up from the very beginning in the niche of the temple of fame which is to be theirs for all time, and gradually have learned to fill it. Others have found their way into their appointed niches with difficulty, and after long searching for them. The former may surely be deemed the most fortunate, the most blessed by both God and nature, and Adelaide Ristori was one of these.

Adelaide Ristori was born into a family closely connected with the stage in Italy, but a family which, hitherto, had produced no special brilliant theatrical star. When she was about three months old, an infant was needed for some scene of a play performed by the company to which her parents belonged; she was put into a basket asleep, and carried thus on to the stage. When the baby was taken from her snug retreat she began to remonstrate and lament at what, no doubt, seemed to her very unwarrantable usage. This sudden thrusting of the nursery into the middle of deep tragedy must, we should have supposed, have had a fatal effect on the performance. One of the ready actors was, however, quite equal to the occasion. He took the child and held her up to the audience; whereupon, the good-natured Italian crowd broke into a mingled shout and laugh. It was thus that Adelaide Ristori received her first shower of public applause.

Little Adelaide's next appearance on the stage had also an element of comedy in it, which did not at all bespeak the tragic actress of the future. She was carried on to the boards to represent the child of a great noble who was escaping from brigands with his little son in his arms. The many strange faces gazing at her, the crowd of strangely-dressed figures round her, the rough words spoken by the supposed robbers, all terrified the child. With a desperate, unexpected effort she freed herself from the embrace of her imaginary father, and springing from his arms ran nimbly away off the stage, leaving the luckless Duke to make his way out of his trouble as he might.

As she grew older, however, the child began very fully to enter into the business of the stage, and to show that she was to the manner born. She learned children's parts, whenever required, with wonderful quickness, and performed them with singular natural grace. Her histrionic talent soon, indeed, began to develop itself in such a remarkable manner, that when she was ten, small grown-up parts were frequently entrusted to her, and she would act a soubrette or a confidante with marvellous spirit and truth for a child of her age.

Thus the girl continued to grow into an actress while her mind and

body unfolded. Her art was literally born in her, and it strengthened with her years. At eighteen she was already a striking personality; with a figure, every movement of which was a note of silent music; she had a face which, without being strictly beautiful, was a whole varied volume in its subtle, swift change of expression, and a mind all glowing with the fire of young genius.

It was at this period she first trod the stage as a tragic actress. The actress who was to have taken the part of Marie Stuart was suddenly struck down by unexpected illness. Mdlle. Ristori, who was always the one of the theatrical company to come to the front in an emergency, and to act while others were debating and doubting offered to undertake the part, though hitherto she had not studied it She acquitted herself well, and gained considerable applause from a provincial audience on the stage of a country town. But even this, her first appearance in tragedy, was no brilliant success. Indeed, an old actor, who was a familiar friend of her family, and therefore spoke out his mind more plainly than politely, assured her that tragedy would never be her forte. "But," he added patronisingly, "you may do very well in comedy by-and-by."

This judgment, however, did not discourage Adelaide Ristori; she knew instinctively that the flame of true genius burnt within her, but she also knew that even genius cannot succeed unless it goes hand-in-hand with resolute will and steady, unwearying work. Day after day did this brave woman go on labouring at improvement in her art; she was always the first to go to rehearsal and the last to depart. She visited the hospitals and watched the last agonies of the dying, that she might reproduce them. She was frequently among the patients in large lunatic asylums that she might study the various phases of insanity, and so represent it more faithfully. She went over and over again the parts of the most famous tragic heroines, until her health suffered by the ceaseless application. From early morn to late at night her life was one story of intense devotion to her art; a story, the heading of every chapter in which was "Work, work, work!" until at length her object was attained, and Italy, from end to end, from the Alps to Calabria, was ringing with the name of Adelaide Ristori.

She continued the same diligence in her art to the very end of her career. Adelaide Ristori was never idle in her profession; in the very highest zenith of her fame she always gave the utmost care and pains to the study of a new part, and never neglected the smallest detail which could contribute towards success.

Her art, dear though it was to her, could not fill the whole of such a nature as that of Adelaide Ristori. She was the most affectionate of daughters, and the most sympathetic of friends; and a stronger love still was soon added to these.

Among the many admirers who fluttered around the celebrated actress was the Marchese del Grillo, an Italian nobleman richly

endowed as to ancient descent and mental ability, but scantily as to worldly wealth. He won her heart, and after meeting and surmounting a few of the obstacles which traditionally are a part of all true love, the pair were at length married.

The Marchese del Grillo never lived to regret having made an actress his wife. In a career in which a woman is more exposed to temptation than in perhaps any other, Madame Ristori—we will call her by the name by which she has always been known to the public, and not by that of her husband—kept a reputation as white as that of a cloistered nun, and she proved the most tender and devoted of wives. No man ever had such a true helpmate in the highest sense of the word as she. Her husband accompanied her in all her professional journeys, and was proud of her fame, and was the faithful and discerning critic of all her performances in her art. He was also of the greatest assistance to her in managing all her business arrangements.

Among all the feelings and passions of human nature which she represented on the stage, there was none which Adelaide Ristori entered into with such intensity and depth of tenderness as that of maternity; she always rose to one of her most sublime heights in her art in the tragedy of Medea, in which the whole interest of the drama hangs on the passion of maternal affection. No words could ever express her beautiful and lofty conception of the duties of a mother. Thus it came to pass when she had children of her own she found it quite impossible to comply with her ideal of maternity and to continue her professional career; she therefore retired from the stage and dedicated herself entirely and exclusively to the education of her children.

It was impossible, however, for a born artist like Adelaide Ristori to live long separated from her art; it attracted her irresistibly as the sun does the flower which bears its name. An invitation came to the great actress from Paris to go thither and perform before the public of the French capital. She could not resist the call; it drew her with the power of the siren's voice over the passing mariner. One day Madame Ristori left her bright, peaceful Italian home, and with her husband and children at her side—she never travelled without her whole family, go where she might—journeyed to Paris.

It was a day of great excitement and anxiety for Adelaide Ristori when she was first to appear before a foreign audience. Hitherto she had never acted on any save an Italian stage; now she was to make a trial of what her powers would be worth before a foreign public who would have no special sympathy for her, or interest in her. It was with a feeling of nervous dread that she gazed down from the windows of her hotel into the crowded Parisian streets and thought of the brilliant, monster, many-sided public before whose judgment she must stand or fall. Her success in Paris was, however, most complete.

Her triumph in France fired the soul of the great artist with a longing to make her name known in other foreign lands. In one European capital after another she appeared and took the public by storm: it was one long, continuous ovation, go where she might. London, Vienna, St. Petersburg were all so many repetitions of the same story of unclouded success. Her triumphs did not spoil her: she was the same conscientious, painstaking artist as ever, and the same devoted wife and mother.

Madame Ristori was never more appreciated than she was in England. The best English critics noticed all the delicate touches of her high, true art, and praised her accordingly. Macbeth was translated for her into Italian, and as Lady Macbeth she thrilled the most thronged London audiences with terror.

She was, however, never fully satisfied with performing Shakespeare in a translation, her reverence for him was intense, and it seemed to her almost a sacrilege to change the language in which he himself wrote, and replace his Saxon English with another tongue which differed so widely from it that often the poet's very meaning was lost. She therefore resolved to learn English so thoroughly that she should be able to perform before an English public in that language. With her usual indomitable energy she carried out this determination; she studied English with an English teacher incessantly in the midst of all her theatrical engagements, and at length learned English pronunciation so thoroughly that she was able to represent all Shakespeare's heroines in the language in which the mighty magician himself created them.

Madame Ristori was not contented with a European fame. Her enthusiasm for her art had made her desire to show what she could do in it in distant lands far over the sea. She believed that a great artist, such as she was, was born to be an educator of the nations, and she would not, if she could help it, fail in her God-given mission. Thus it came to pass that she started for a journey round the world, her intention being to act in every city in which she arrived. This plan she carried out to the letter, and success and applause followed her everywhere. Her husband and children were still her faithful, ceaseless companions, and the same company of actors and actresses went with her in all her professional wanderings.

One great proof of the strength and beauty of Madame Ristori's moral character and of her sympathetic nature was the respect and affection with which she was regarded by all the secondary artists who acted with her. Their prima donna was a religion with them; her Yea and Nay were law, her praise was sunshine; it mattered not where they went so she were at their side.

One of Madame Ristori's most marked and favourite virtues was punctuality; it was her boast that she never broke faith with the public in her life. There was no sacrifice she would not make, no effort she would think too great, to fulfil a professional engagement.

If she said she would act in such a town on such a day, she was as sure to be there as that the sun would rise. The remarkable physical health which she enjoyed had, no doubt, much to do with this speciality of hers, so praiseworthy in a great artist, of never disappointing the public, but it was also owing to her unconquerable energy as well.

Many are the pictures which stand out before us in Madame Ristori's life, as we flash upon it the electric light of fancy. Let us glance for a moment at a few of them.

The theatre at Madrid is one mosaic of eager, expectant faces to-night. The Queen herself is expected to be among the audience, for Madame Ristori is to appear in one of her most celebrated characters In her dressing-room sits the great actress herself, surrounded with gorgeous costumes, and with her face instinct with power—the power that is soon to thrill the waiting multitude. Suddenly the door opens, and her husband enters with a weeping woman at his side. That sorrow-stricken form is a strange, sad contrast to the crowded theatre, with its hum of many voices, with its flash of many colours. What does this mourner do in such a place?

This is the female relative of a young soldier who is sentenced to die to-morrow for a crime in which there were many extenuating circumstances; so many that the public voice has been uplifted in his favour; but Justice persists in going sternly on her way. Madame Ristori is now asked to make a personal request to the Queen, with whom she is known to be a special favourite, for the man's life. At first she hesitates, for this is a bold proceeding for an actress towards royalty, however great in her own art she may be. But her sympathetic nature gets the better of all other considerations; she will dare to do it, and if she loses the royal patronage it will at least be in a good cause.

Between the acts Madame Ristori is conducted to the Queen's box. Her heart is beating, for though she has often been a queen on the stage, she does not know much of the ways of courts in real life. Never, however, was anything more gracious done by royalty than the Spanish Queen's reception of the great actress to-night. Nothing can be more full of womanly grace and tenderness than the picture of the two women, one granting a human life to the prayer of the other; one full of majestic grace, the other of dignified modesty. The news that the sentence of death is revoked spreads among the crowd in the theatre, and when the curtain again rises a volley of cheers greets first the Queen and then the actress, and does homage to genuine womanhood in both.

Another picture which meets our gaze is of a very different character. It is a wild, stormy night in the North; a foaming, swollen river is rushing beneath the arch of a dilapidated bridge. It was an old rickety bridge even last week when the weather was bright and still; now the floods, consequent on the heavy rains, have so damaged it

that to cross it seems, in truth, a service of danger. On the bank, dimly lit by a flickering lantern or two which are borne by a few friendly peasants, stands a dreary group. The men have gloomy faces, and now and then an oath in Italian is muttered by them; the women cry and call on the saints, and wrap themselves shivering in their cloaks. They have to cross that angry, chafing river, but who will dare to trust themselves on that tottering bridge?

Suddenly a tall female figure appears among the doubting, trembling band; they make way for her, and there is a hush among them.

"We have promised, and we must not break our word to the public," she says; "no, not even if it were an ocean instead of a river."

Then she steps on the bridge, and walks across it as leisurely and calmly as if she were treading the smooth turf of a sunny garden on a summer morning. And the group on the bank hesitate no longer. They follow her as if she possessed some irresistible spell which drew them after her, and soon they are all standing in safety on the opposite shore. Madame Ristori and her company are engaged to act in a city which lies beyond the river, and the great artist will not fail to keep up her well-known reputation of never disappointing her public.

The next scene in which we will catch a glimpse of the queen of tragedy, as she was often called, has a strong element of comedy in it. The play which Madame Ristori is now rehearsing is a classical drama, and she is in one of the German universities. It is an absolute necessity for the play that there should be a chorus of Greek maidens who have to be in constant attendance on the heroine, and to-day Madame Ristori and her chorus are rehearsing together. We gaze round on the Grecian damsels, and first are struck by the remarkable height of most of them, and by the very unfairy-like proportions of the feet and hands which appear from beneath the classic, gold-fringed robes. Then we look a little closer at the troop of maidens, and to our horror we perceive that, in spite of all efforts used to conceal the fact, some of them are actually endowed with whiskers and moustaches. The solution to the strange enigma is, that the students of the university have insisted on taking the part of the chorus, and Madame Ristori is diligently drilling her strange recruits.

But the light fades, the dissolving views vanish; we have finished the story of Adelaide Ristori, the great artist, the noble, true-hearted woman.

ALICE KING.

FEATHERSTON'S STORY.

AT THE MAISON ROUGE.

LIKE many another active housewife, Madame Cardiac was always busy on Monday mornings. On the one about to be referred to, she had finished her household duties by eleven o'clock, and then sat down in her little salle-à-manger, which she also made her work-room, to mend some of M. Cardiac's cotton socks. By her side, on the small work-table, lay a silver brooch which Miss Perry had inadvertently left behind her the previous evening. Mary Cardiac was considering at what hour she could most conveniently go out to leave it at Madame Deauville's, when she heard Pauline answer a ring at the door bell, and Miss Preen came in.

"Oh, Lavinia, I am glad to see you. You are an early visitor. Are you not well?" continued Madame Cardiac, noticing the pale, sad face. "Is anything the matter?"

"I am in great trouble, Mary; I cannot rest; and I have come to talk to you about it," said Lavinia, taking the sable boa from her neck and untying her bonnet strings. "If things were to continue as they are now, I should die of it."

Drawing a chair near to Mary Cardiac, Lavinia entered upon her narrative. She spoke first of general matters. The home discomfort, the trouble with Captain Fennel regarding Nancy's money, and the difficulty she had to keep up the indispensable payments to the tradespeople, expressing her firm belief that in future he would inevitably seize upon Nancy's portion when it came and confiscate it. Next, she went on to tell the story of the past night—Sunday: how the old terrible horror had come upon her of entering the house, of the fancied appearance of Edwin Fennel in the passage, and of the dream that followed. All this latter part was but a repetition of what she had told Madame Cardiac three or four months ago. Hearing it for the second time, it impressed Mary Cardiac's imagination. But she did not speak at once.

"I never in my life saw anything plainer or that looked more life-like than Captain Fennel, as he stood and gazed at me from the end of the passage, with the evil look on his countenance," resumed Lavinia. "And I hardly know why I tell you about it again, Mary, except that I have no one else to speak to. You rather laughed at me the first time, if you remember; perhaps you will laugh again now."

"No, no," dissented Mary Cardiac. "I did not put faith in it before, believing you were deceived by the uncertain light in the passage and were perhaps thinking of him, and that the dream afterwards was merely the result of your fright; nothing else. But now that you have had a second experience of it, I don't doubt that you do see this spectre, and that the dream follows as a sequence to it. And I think," she added, slowly and emphatically, "that it has come to warn you of some threatened harm."

"I seem to see that it has," murmured Lavinia. "Why else should it come at all? I wish I could picture it to you half vividly enough: the reality of it and the horror. Mary, I am growing seriously afraid."

"Were I you, I should get away from the house," said Madame Cardiac. "Leave them to themselves."

"It is what I mean to do, Mary. I cannot remain in it, apart from this undefined fear—which of course *may* be only superstitious fancy," hastily acknowledged Lavinia. "If things continue in the present state—and there is no prospect of their changing——"

"I should leave at once—as soon as they arrive home," rather sharply interrupted Mary Cardiac, who seemed to like the aspect of what she had heard less and less.

"As soon as I can make arrangements. They come home to-night; I received a letter from Nancy this morning. They have been only at Pontipette all the time."

"Only at Pontipette!"

"Nancy says so. It did as well as any other place. Captain Fennel's motive was to hide away from the lawyers we met at the table d'hôte."

"Have they left Sainteville, I wonder, those lawyers?"

"Yes," said Lavinia. "On Friday I met Mr. Lockett when I was going to the Rue Lamartine, and he told me he was leaving for Calais with his friend on Saturday morning. It is rather remarkable," she added, after a pause, "that the first time I saw that appearance in the passage and dreamed the dream, should have been the eve of Mr. Fennel's return here, and that it is the same again now."

"You must leave the house, Lavinia," reiterated Madame Cardiac.

"Let me see," considered Lavinia. "April comes in this week. Next week will be Passion Week, preceding Easter. I will stay with them over Easter, and then leave."

Monsieur Jules Cardiac's sock, in process of renovation, had been allowed to fall upon the mender's lap. She slowly took it up again, speaking thoughtfully.

"I should leave at once; before Easter. But you will see how he behaves, Lavinia. If not well; if he gives you any cause of annoyance; come away there and then. We will take you in, mind, if you have not found a place to go to."

Lavinia thanked her, and re-arranged her bonnet preparatory to

returning home. She went out with a heavy heart. Only one poor twelvemonth to have brought about all this change!

At the door of the petite Maison Rouge, when she reached it, stood Flore, parleying with a slim youth, who held an open paper in his outstretched hand. Flore was refusing to touch the paper, which was both printed and written on, and looked official.

"I tell him that Monsieur le Capitaine is not at home; he can bring it when he is," explained Flore to her mistress in English.

Lavinia turned to the young man. "Captain Fennel has been away from Sainteville for a few days; he probably will be here to-morrow," she said. "Do you wish to leave this paper for him?"

"Yes," said the messenger, evidently understanding English but speaking in French, as he contrived to slip the paper into Miss Preen's unconscious hand. "You will have the politeness to give it to him, madame."

And, with that, he went off down the entry, whistling.

"Do you know what the paper is, Flore?" asked Lavinia.

"I think so," said Flore. "I've seen these papers before to-day. It's just a sort of order from the law court on Captain Fennel, to pay up some debt that he owes; and, if he does not pay, the court will issue a procès against him. That's what it is, madame."

Lavinia carried the paper into the salon, and sat studying it. As far as she could make it out, Mr. Edwin Fennel was called upon to pay to some creditor the sum of one hundred and eighty-three francs, without delay.

"Over seven pounds! And if he does not pay, the law expenses, to enforce it, will increase the debt perhaps by one half," sighed Lavinia. "There may be, and no doubt *are*, other things at the back of this. Will he turn us out of house and home?"

Propping the paper against the wall over the mantel-piece, she left it there, that it might meet the Captain's eye on his return.

Not until quite late that evening did Madame Cardiac get her husband to herself, for he brought in one of the young under-masters at the college to dine with them. But as soon as they were sitting cosily alone, he smoking his pipe before bed-time, she told him all she had heard from Lavinia Preen.

"I don't like it, Jules; I don't indeed," she said. "It has made a strangely disagreeable impression on me. What is your opinion?"

Placid Monsieur Jules did not seem to have much opinion one way or the other. Upon the superstitious portion of the tale he, being a practical Frenchman, totally declined to have any at all. He was very sorry for the uncomfortable position Miss Preen found herself in, and he certainly was not surprised she should wish to quit the petite Maison Rouge if affairs could not be made more agreeable there. As to the Capitaine Fennel, he felt free to confess there was something about him which he did not like: and he was sure no man of honour ought to have run away clandestinely, as he did, with Miss Nancy.

"You see, Jules: what the man aims at is to get hold of Nancy's income and apply it to his own uses—and for Lavinia to keep them upon hers."

"I see," said Jules.

"And Lavinia *cannot* do it; she has not half enough. It troubles me very much," flashed Madame Cardiac. "She says she shall stay with them until Easter is over. *I* should not; I should leave them to it to-morrow."

"Yes, my dear, that's all very well," nodded M. Jules; "but we cannot always do precisely what we would. Miss Preen is responsible for the rent of that house, and if Fennel and his wife do not pay it, she would have to. She must have a thorough understanding upon that point before she leaves it."

By the nine o'clock train that night they came home. Lavinia, pleading a bad headache and feeling altogether out of sorts, got Flore to remain for once, and went herself to bed. She dreaded the very sight of Captain Fennel.

In the morning she saw that the paper had disappeared from the mantel-piece. He was quite jaunty at breakfast, talking to her and Nancy about Pontipette; and things passed pleasantly. About eleven o'clock he began brushing his hat to go out.

"I'm going to have a look at Griffin, and see how he's getting on," he remarked. "Perhaps the old man would enjoy a drive this fine day; if so, you may not see me back till dinner-time."

But just as Captain Fennel turned out of the Place Ronde to the Rue de Tessin, he came upon Charles Palliser, strolling along.

"Fine day, Mr. Charles," he remarked graciously.

"Capital," assented Charles, "and I'm glad of it: the old gentleman will have a good passage. I've just seen him off by the eleven train."

"Seems to me you spend your time in seeing people off by trains. Which old gentleman is it now?—him from Below?"

Charley laughed. "It's Griffin this time," said he. "Being feeble, I thought I might be of use in starting him, and went up."

"Griffin!" exclaimed Captain Fennel. "Why, where's he gone to?"

"To Calais. En route for Dover and——"

"What's he gone for? When's he coming back?" interrupted the Captain, speaking like a man in great amazement.

"He is not coming back at all; he has gone for good," said Charley. "His daughter came to fetch him."

"Why on earth should she do that?"

"It seems that her husband, a clergyman at Kensington, fell across Major Smith last week in London, and put some pretty close questions to him about the old man, for they had been made uneasy by his letters of late. The Major——"

"What business had the Major in London?" questioned Captain Fennel, impatiently.

"You can ask him," said Charles, equably. "I didn't. He is back again. Well, Major Smith, being questioned, made no bones about it at all; said Griffin and Griffin's money both wanted looking after. Upon that, the daughter came straight off, arriving here on Sunday morning; she settled things yesterday, and has carried her father away to-day. He was as pleased as Punch, poor childish old fellow, at the prospect of a voyage in the boat."

Whether this information put a check upon any little plan Mr. Fennel may have been entertaining, Charles Palliser could not positively know; but he thought he had never seen so evil an eye as the one glaring upon him. Only for a moment; just a flash; and then the face was smoothed again. Charley had his ideas—and all his wits about him; and old Griffin had babbled publicly.

Captain Fennel strolled by his side towards the port, talking of Pontipette and other matters of indifference. When in sight of the harbour, he halted.

"I must wish you good-day now, Palliser; I have letters to write," said he; and walked briskly back again.

Lavinia and Nancy were sitting together in the salon when he reached home. Nancy was looking scared.

"Edwin," she said, leaving her chair to meet him: "Edwin, what do you think Lavinia has been saying? That she is going to leave us."

"Oh, indeed," he carelessly answered.

"But it is true, Edwin; she means it."

"Yes, I mean it," interposed Lavinia, very quietly. "You and Nancy will be better without me; perhaps happier."

He looked at her for a full minute in silence, then laughed a little. "Like Darby and Joan," he remarked, as he put his writing-case on the table and sat down to it.

Mrs. Fennel returned to her chair by Lavinia, who was sitting close to the window mending a lace collar which had been torn in the ironing. As usual, Nancy was doing nothing.

"You *couldn't* leave me, Lavinia, you know," she said in coaxing tones.

"I know that I never thought to do so, Ann, but circumstances alter cases," answered the elder sister. Both of them had dropped their voices to a low key, not to disturb the letter writer. But he could hear if he chose to listen. "I began putting my things together yesterday and shall finish doing it at leisure. I will stay over Easter with you; but go then, I shall."

"You must be cruel to think of such a thing, Lavinia."

"Not cruel," corrected Lavinia. "I am sorry, Ann, but the step is forced upon me. The anxieties in regard to money matters are wearing me out; they would wear me out altogether if I did not end them. And there are other things which urge upon me the expediency of departure from this house."

"What things?"

"I cannot speak of them. Never mind what they are, Ann. They concern myself; not you."

Ann Fennel sat twirling one of her fair silken ringlets between her thumb and finger; a habit of hers when thinking.

"Where shall you live, Lavinia, if you do leave? Take another apartment at Sainteville?"

"I think not. It is a puzzling question. Possibly I may go back to Buttermead, and get some family to take me in as boarder," dreamily answered Lavinia. "Seventy-five pounds a year will not keep me luxuriously."

Captain Fennel lifted his face. "If it will not keep one, how is it to keep two?" he demanded, in rather defiant tones.

"I don't know anything about that," said Lavinia, civilly. "I have not two to keep; only one."

Nancy chanced to catch a glimpse of his face just then, and its look frightened her. Lavinia had her back to him, and did not see it. Nancy began to cry quietly.

"Oh, Lavinia, you will think better of this; you will not leave us!" she implored. "We could not do at all without you and your half of the money."

Lavinia had finished her collar, and rose to take it upstairs. "Don't be distressed, Nancy," she paused to say; "it is a thing that *must be*. I am very sorry; but it is not my fault. As you ——"

"You can stay in the house if you choose!" flashed Nancy, growing feebly angry.

"No, I cannot. I *cannot*," repeated Lavinia. "I begin to foresee that I might—might die of it."

II.

SAINTEVILLE felt surprised and sorry to hear that Miss Preen was going to leave it to its own devices, for the town had grown to like her. Lavinia did not herself talk about going, but the news somehow got wind. People wondered why she went. Matters, as connected with the financial department of the little Maison Rouge, were known but imperfectly; to most people not known at all; so that reason was not thought of. It was quite understood that Ann Preen's stolen marriage, capped by the bringing home of her husband to the Maison Rouge, had been a sharp blow to Miss Preen: perhaps, said Sainteville now, she had tried living with them and found it did not answer. Or perhaps she was only going away for a change, and would return after awhile.

Passion week passed, and Easter week came in, and Lavinia made her arrangements for the succeeding one. On the Tuesday in that next week, all being well, she would quit Sainteville. Her preparations were made; her larger box was already packed and corded.

Nancy, of shallow temperament and elastic spirits, seemed quite to have recovered from the sting of the proposed parting; she helped Lavinia to put up her laces and other little fine things, prattling all the time. Captain Fennel maintained his suavity. Beyond the words he had spoken—as to how did she expect the income to keep two if it would not keep one—he had said nothing. It might be that he hardly yet believed Lavinia would positively go.

But she was going. At first only to Boulogne-sur-mer. M. Jules Cardiac had a cousin, Madame Degravier, who kept a superior boarding-house there, much patronised by the English; he had written to her to introduce Miss Preen, and to intimate that it would oblige him if the terms were made très facile. Madame had written back to Lavinia most satisfactorily, and, so far, that was arranged.

Once at Boulogne in peace and quietness, Lavinia would have leisure to decide upon her future plans. She hoped to pay a visit to Buttermead in the summer time, for she had begun to yearn for a sight of the old place and its people. After that—well, she should see. If things went on pleasantly at Sainteville; that is, if Captain Fennel and Nancy were still in the little Maison Rouge, and he was enabled to find means to continue in it; then perhaps she might return to the town. Not to make one of their household; never again that; but she might find a little pied-à-terre in some other home.

Meanwhile, Lavinia heard no more of the procès, and she wondered how the Captain was meeting it. During the Easter week she made her farewell calls. That week she was not very much at home; one or other of her old acquaintances wanted her. Major and Mrs. Smith had her to spend a day with them; the Miss Bosanquets invited her also; and so on.

One call, involving also private business, she made upon old Madame Sauvage, Mary Cardiac accompanying her. Monsieur Gustave was called up to the salon to assist at the conference. Lavinia partly explained her position to them in strict confidence, and the motive, as touching pecuniary affairs, which was taking her away: she said nothing of that other and greater motive, her superstitious fear.

"I have come to speak of the rent," she said to M. Gustave, and Mary Cardiac repeated the words in French to old Madame Sauvage. "You must in future look to Captain Fennel for it; you must make him pay it if possible. At the same time, I admit my own responsibility," added Lavinia, "and if it be found totally impracticable to get it from Captain Fennel or my sister, I shall pay it to you. This must, of course, be kept strictly between ourselves, M. Gustave; you and madame understand that. If Captain Fennel gained any intimation of it, he would take care not to pay it."

M. Gustave and Madame his mother assured her that they fully understood, and that she might rely upon their honour. They were grieved to lose so excellent a tenant and neighbour as Miss Preen, and wished circumstances had been more kindly. One thing she might

rest assured of—that they should feel at least as mortified at having to apply to her for the rent as she herself would be, and they would not leave a stone unturned to extract it from the hands of Captain Fennel.

"It has altogether been a most bitter trial to me," sighed Lavinia as she stood up to say farewell to madame.

The old lady understood, and the tears came into her compassionate eyes as she held Lavinia's hands between her own. "Ay, for certain," she replied in French. "She and her sons had said so privately to one another ever since the abrupt coming home of the strange captain to the petite maison à côté."

On Sunday, Lavinia, accompanied by Nancy and Captain Fennel, attended morning service for the last time. She spoke to several acquaintances coming out, wishing them good-bye, and was hastening to overtake her sister, when she heard rapid steps behind her, and a voice speaking. Turning, she saw Charley Palliser.

"Miss Preen," cried he, "my aunt wants you to come home and dine with us. See, she is waiting for you. You could not come any one day last week, you know."

"I was not able to come to you last week, Mr. Charles; I had so much to do, and so many engagements," said Lavinia, as she walked back to Mrs. Hardy, who stood smiling.

"But you will come to-day, dear Miss Preen," said old Mrs. Hardy, who had caught the words. "We have a lovely fricandeau of veal, and——"

"Why, that is just our own dinner," interrupted Lavinia gaily. "I should like to come to you, Mrs. Hardy, but I cannot. It is my last Sunday at home, and I could not well go out and leave them."

They saw the force of the objection. Mrs. Hardy asked whether she should be at church in the evening. Lavinia replied that she intended to be, and they agreed to bid each other farewell then.

"You don't know what you've lost, Miss Preen," said Charley, comically. "There's a huge cream tart—lovely."

Captain Fennel was quite lively at the dinner-table. He related a rather laughable story which had been told him by Major Smith, with whom he had walked for ten minutes after church, and was otherwise gracious.

After dinner, while Flore was taking away the things, he left the room, and came back with three glasses of liqueur, on a small waiter, handing one to Lavinia, another to his wife, and keeping the third himself. It was the yellow chartreuse; Captain Fennel kept a bottle of it and of one or two other choice liqueurs in the little cupboard at the end of the passage, and treated them to a glass sometimes.

"How delightful!" cried Nancy, who liked chartreuse and anything else that was good.

They sat and sipped it, talking pleasantly together. The Captain soon finished his, and said he should take a stroll on the pier. It was a bright day with a brisk wind, which seemed to be getting higher.

"The London boat ought to be in about four o'clock," he remarked. "It's catching it sweetly, I know; passengers will look like ghosts. Au revoir; don't get quarrelling." And thus, nodding to the two ladies, he went out gaily.

Not much danger of their quarrelling. They turned their chairs to the fire, and plunged into conversation, which chanced to turn upon Buttermead. In calling up one reminiscence of the old place after another, now Lavinia, now Nancy, the time passed on. Lavinia wore her silver-grey silk dress that day, with some yellowish-looking lace falling at the throat and wrists.

Flore came in to bring the tea-tray; she always put it on the table in readiness on a Sunday afternoon. The water, she said, would be on the boil in the kitchen by the time they wanted it. And then she went away as usual for the rest of the day.

Not long afterwards, Lavinia, who was speaking, suddenly stopped in the middle of a sentence. She started up in her chair, fell back again, and clasped her hands below the chest with a great cry.

"Oh, Nancy! —— Nancy!"

Nancy dashed across the hearthrug. "What is it?" she exclaimed. "What is it, Lavinia?"

Lavinia apparently could not say what it was. She seemed to be in the greatest agony; her face had turned livid. Nancy was next door to an imbecile in any emergency, and fairly wrung her hands in her distress.

"Oh, what can be the matter with me?" gasped Lavinia. "Nancy, I think I am dying."

The next moment she had glided from the chair to the floor, and lay there shrieking and writhing. Bursting away, Nancy ran round to the next house, all closed to-day, rang wildly at the private door, and when it was opened by Mariette, rushed upstairs to madame's salon.

Madame Veuve Sauvage, comprehending that something was amiss, without understanding Nancy's frantic words, put a shawl on her shoulders to hasten to the other house, ordering Mariette to follow her. Her sons were out.

There lay Lavinia, in the greatest agony. Madame Sauvage sent Mariette off for M. Dupuis, and told her to fly. "Better bring M. Henri Dupuis, Mariette," she called after her: "he will get quicker over the ground than his old father."

But M. Henry Dupuis, as it turned out, was absent. He had left that morning for Calais with his wife, to spend two days with her friends, who lived there, purposing to be back early on Tuesday morning. Old M. Dupuis came very quickly. He thought Mademoiselle Preen must have inward inflammation, he said to Madame Sauvage, and inquired what she had eaten for dinner. Nancy told him as well as she could between her sobs and her broken speech.

A fricandeau of veal, potatoes, a cauliflower au gratin, and a frangipane tart from the pastrycook's. No fruit or any other dessert. They took a little Bordeaux wine with dinner, and a liqueur glass of chartreuse afterwards.

All very wholesome, pronounced M. Dupuis, with satisfaction; not at all likely to disagree with mademoiselle. Possibly she had caught a chill.

Mariette had run for Flore, who came in grand consternation. Between them all they got Lavinia upstairs, undressed her and laid her in bed, applying hot flannels to the pain—and M. Dupuis administered in a wine-glass of water every quarter of an hour some drops from a glass phial which he had brought in his pocket.

It was close upon half-past five when Captain Fennel came in. He expressed much surprise and concern, saying, like the doctor, that she must have eaten something which had disagreed with her. The doctor avowed that he could not otherwise account for the seizure; he did not altogether think it was produced by a chill, and he spoke again of the dinner. Captain Fennel observed that as to the dinner they had all three partaken of it, one the same as another; he did not see why it should affect his sister-in-law and not himself or his wife. This reasoning was evident, admitted M. Dupuis; but Miss Preen had touched nothing since her breakfast except at dinner. In point of fact, he felt very much at a loss, he did not scruple to add: but the more acute symptoms were showing a slight improvement, he was thankful to perceive, and he trusted to bring her round.

As he did. In a few hours the pain had so far abated, or yielded to remedies, that poor Lavinia, worn out, dropped into a comfortable sleep. M. Dupuis was round again early in the morning, and found her recovered, though still feeling tired and very weak. He advised her to lie in bed until the afternoon; not to get up then unless she felt inclined; and he charged her to take chiefly milk food all the day, no solids whatever.

Lavinia slept again all the morning, and awoke very much refreshed. In the afternoon she felt quite equal to getting up, and did so, dressing herself in the grey silk she had worn the previous day, because it was nearest at hand. She then penned a line to Madame Degravier, saying she was unable to travel to Boulogne on the morrow, as had been fixed, but hoped to be there on Wednesday, or at the latest Thursday.

Captain Fennel, who generally took possession of the easiest chair in the salon, and the warmest place, resigned it to Lavinia the instant she appeared downstairs. He shook her by the hand, said how glad he was that she had recovered from her indisposition, and installed her in the chair with a cushion at her back and a rug over her knees. All she had to dread now, he thought, was cold; she must guard against that. Lavinia replied that she could not in the least imagine why

had been the matter with her; she had never had a similar attack before, and had never been in such dreadful pain.

Presently Mary Cardiac came in, having heard of the affair from Mariette, whom she had met in the fish-market during the morning. All danger was over, Mariette said, and mademoiselle was then sleeping quietly: so Madame Cardiac, not to disturb her, put off calling until the afternoon. Captain Fennel sat talking with her a few minutes, and then went out. For some cause or other he never seemed to be quite at ease in the presence of Madame Cardiac.

"I know what it must have been," cried Mary Cardiac, coming to one of her rapid conclusions after listening to the description of the illness. "Misled by the sunny spring days last week, you went and left off some of your warm underclothing, Lavinia, and so caught cold."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Nancy, who had curled herself up on the sofa like a ball, not having yet recovered from her fatigue and fright. "Leave off one's warm things the beginning of April! I never heard of such imprudence! How came you to do it, Lavinia?"

"I did not do it," said Lavinia, quietly. "I have not left off anything. Should I be so silly as to do that with a journey before me?"

"Then what caused the attack?" debated Madame Cardiac. "Something you had eaten?"

Lavinia shook her head helplessly. "It could hardly have been that, Mary. I took nothing whatever that Nancy and Captain Fennel did not take. I wish I did know—that I might guard, if possible, against a similar attack in future. The pain seized me all in a moment. I thought I was dying."

"It sounds odd," said Madame Cardiac. "Monsieur Dupuis does not know either, it seems. That's why I thought you might have been leaving off your things, and did not like to tell him."

"I conclude that it must have been one of those mysterious attacks of sudden illness to which we are all liable, but for which no one can account," sighed Lavinia. "I hope I shall never have it again. This experience has been enough for a lifetime."

Mary Cardiac warmly echoed the hope as she rose to take her departure. She advised Lavinia to go to bed early, and promised to come again in the morning.

While Captain Fennel and Nancy dined, Flore made her mistress some tea, and brought in with it some thin bread-and-butter. Lavinia felt all the better for the refreshment, laughingly remarking that by the morning she was sure she should be as hungry as a hunter. She sat chatting, and sometimes dozing between whiles, till about a quarter to nine o'clock, when she said she would go to bed.

Nancy went to the kitchen to make her a cup of arrowroot. Lavinia then wished Captain Fennel good-night, and went upstairs. Flore had left as usual, after washing up the dinner things.

"Lavinia, shall I——Oh, she has gone on," broke off Nancy,

who had come in with the breakfast cup of arrowroot in her hand. "Edwin, do you think I may venture to put a little brandy into this?"

Captain Fennel sat reading with his face to the fire and the lamp at his elbow. He turned round.

"Brandy?" said he. "I'm sure I don't know. If that pain meant inflammation, brandy might do harm. Ask Lavinia; she had better decide for herself. No, no, leave the arrowroot on the table here," he hastily cried as Nancy was going out of the room with the cup. "Tell Lavinia to come down, and we'll discuss the matter with her. Of course a little brandy would do her an immense deal of good, if she might take it with safety."

Nancy did as she was told. Leaving the cup and saucer on the table, she went up to her sister. In a minute or two she was back again.

"Lavinia won't come down again, Edwin; she is already half-undressed. She thinks she had better be on the safe side and not have the brandy."

"All right," replied the Captain, who was sitting as before, intent on his book. Nancy took the cup upstairs.

She helped her sister into bed, and then gave her the arrowroot, inquiring whether she had made it well.

"Quite well, only it was rather sweet," answered Lavinia.

"Sweet!" echoed Nancy, in reply. "Why, I hardly put any sugar at all into it; I remembered that you don't like it."

Lavinia finished the cupful. Nancy tucked her up, and gave her a good-night kiss. "Pleasant dreams, Lavinia, dear," she called back, as she was shutting the door.

"Thank you, Nancy; but I hope I shall sleep to-night without dreaming," answered Lavinia.

As Nancy went downstairs she turned into the kitchen for her own arrowroot, which she had left all that time in the saucepan. Being fond of it, she had made enough for herself as well as for Lavinia.

III.

It was between half-past ten and eleven, and Captain and Mrs. Fennel were in their bedroom preparing to retire to rest. She stood before the glass doing her hair, having thrown a thin print cotton cape upon her shoulders as usual, to protect her dress; he had taken off his coat.

"What was that?" cried she, in startled tones.

Some sound had penetrated to their room. The Captain put his coat on a chair and bent his ear. "I did not hear anything, Nancy," he answered.

"There it is again!" exclaimed Nancy. "Oh, it is Lavinia! I do believe it is Lavinia!"

Flinging the comb from her hand, Nancy dashed out at the room

door—which was near the head of the stairs; Lavinia's door being nearly at the end of the passage. Unmistakable sounds, now a shriek, now a wail, came from Lavinia's chamber. Nancy flew into it, her fair hair falling on her shoulders.

"What is it, Lavinia?—Oh, Edwin, Edwin, come here!" called Mrs. Fennel, beside herself with terror. Lavinia was rolling about the bed, as she had the previous day rolled on the salon floor; her face was distorted with pain, her moans and cries were agonising.

Captain Fennel stayed to put on his coat, came to Lavinia's door, and put his head inside it. "Is it the pain again?" he asked.

"Yes; it is the pain again," gasped Lavinia, in answer. "I am dying. I am surely dying."

That put the finishing touch to timorous Nancy. "Edwin, run, run for M. Dupuis," she implored. "Oh, what shall we do? What shall we do?"

Captain Fennel descended the stairs. When Nancy thought he must have been gone out at least a minute or two, he appeared again with a wine-glass of hot brandy and water, which he had stayed to mix.

"Try and get her to take this," he said. "It can't do harm; it may do good. And if you could put hot flannels to her, Nancy, it might be well: they eased the pain yesterday. I'll bring Dupuis here as soon as I can."

Lavinia could not take the brandy and water, and it was left upon the grey marble top of the chest of drawers. Her paroxysms increased; Nancy had never seen or imagined such pain, for this attack was worse than the other, and she almost lost her wits with terror. Could she see Lavinia die before her eyes?—no helping hand near to strive to save her? Just as Nancy had done before, she did again now.

Flying down the stairs and out of the house, across the yard and through the dark entry, she seized the bell-handle of Madame Veuve Sauvage's door and pulled it frantically. The household had all retired for the night.

Presently a window above opened, and M. Gustave—Nancy knew his voice—looked out.

"Who's there?" he asked in French. "What's the matter?"

"Oh, M. Gustave, come in for the love of Heaven!" responded poor Nancy, looking up. "She has another attack, worse than the first; she's dying, and there's no one in the house but me."

"Directly, madame; I am with you on the instant," he kindly answered. "I but wait to put on my effects."

He was at the little Maison Rouge almost as soon as she; his brother Emile followed him in, and Mariette, whom they had called, came shortly. Miss Preen lay in dreadful paroxysms; it did appear to them that she must die. Nancy and Mariette busied themselves in the kitchen, heating flannels.

The doctor did not seem to come very quickly. Captain Fennel at length made his appearance and said M. Dupuis would be there in a minute or two.

"I am content to hear that," remarked M. Gustave in reply. "I was just about to despatch my brother for the first doctor he could find."

"Never had such trouble in ringing up a doctor before," returned Captain Fennel. "I suppose the old man sleeps too soundly to be easily aroused; many elderly people do."

"I fear she is dying," whispered M. Gustave.

"No, no, surely not!" cried Captain Fennel, recoiling a step at the words. "What can it possibly be? What causes the attacks?"

Whilst M. Gustave was shaking his head at this difficult question, M. Dupuis arrived. M. Emile, anxious to make himself useful, was requested by Mariette to go to Flore's domicile and ring her up. Flore seemed to have been sleeping with her clothes on, for they came back together.

M. Dupuis could do nothing for his patient. He strove to administer drops of medicinal remedies; he caused her to be nearly smothered in scalding-hot flannels—all in vain. He despatched M. Emile Sauvage to bring in another doctor, M. Podevin, who lived near. All in vain. Lavinia died. Just at one o'clock in the morning, before the cocks had begun to crow, Lavinia Preen died.

The shock to those in the house was great. It seemed to stun them, one and all. The brothers Sauvage, leaving a few words of heartfelt sympathy with Captain Fennel, withdrew silently to their own home. Mariette stayed. The two doctors, shut up in the salon, talked with one another, endeavouring to account for the death.

"Inflammation, no doubt," observed M. Dupuis; "but even so, the death has been too speedy."

"More like poison," rejoined the younger man, M. Podevin. He was brother to the proprietor of the Hôtel des Princes, and was much respected by his fellow-citizens as a safe and skilful practitioner.

"The thought of poison naturally occurred to me on Sunday, when I was first called to her," returned M. Dupuis, "but it could not be borne out. You see she had partaken of nothing, either in food or drink, but what the other inmates had taken; absolutely nothing. This was assured me by them all, herself included."

"She seems to have taken nothing to-day either that could in any way harm her," said M. Podevin.

"Nothing. She took a cup of tea at five o'clock, which the servant, Flore, prepared and also partook of herself—a cup out of the same tea-pot. Later, when the poor lady went to bed, her sister made her a basin of arrowroot, and made herself one at the same time."

"Well, it appears strange."

"It could not have been a chill. The symptoms——"

"A chill?—bah!" interrupted M. Podevin. "We shall know more after the post-mortem," he added, taking up his hat. "Of course there must be one."

Wishing his brother practitioner good-night, he left. M. Dupuis went looking about for Captain Fennel, and found him in the kitchen, standing by the hot stove, and drinking a glass of hot brandy and water. The rest were upstairs.

"This event has shaken my nerves, Doctor," apologised the Captain, in reference to the glass. "I was never so upset. Shall I mix you one?"

M. Dupuis shook his head. He never took anything so strong. The most calming thing, in his opinion, was a glass of eau sucrée, with a teaspoonful of orange-flower water in it.

"Sir," he went on, "I have been conversing with my esteemed confrère. We cannot, either of us, decide what mademoiselle has died of, being unable to see any adequate cause for it; and we wish to hold a post-mortem examination. I presume you will not object to it?"

"Certainly not; I think there should be one," briskly spoke Captain Fennel after a moment's pause. "For our satisfaction, if for nothing else, Doctor."

"Very well. Will nine o'clock in the morning suit you, as to time? It should be made early."

"I—expect it will," answered the Captain, reflecting. "Do you hold it here?"

"Undoubtedly. In her own room."

"Then wait just one minute, will you, Doctor, whilst I speak to my wife. Nine o'clock seems a little early, but I daresay it will suit."

M. Dupuis went back into the salon. He had waited there a short interval, when Mrs. Fennel burst in, wild with excitement. Her hair still hung down her back, her eyes were swollen with weeping, her face was one of piteous distress. She advanced to M. Dupuis, and held up her trembling hands.

The old Doctor understood English fairly well when it was quietly spoken; but he did not in the least understand it in a storm. Sobbing, trembling, Mrs. Fennel was beseeching him not to hold a post-mortem on her poor dead sister for the love of mercy.

Surprised and distressed, he placed her on the sofa, soothed her into calmness, and then bade her tell him quietly what her petition was. She repeated it—begging, praying, imploring him not to disturb her sister now she was at rest; but to let her be put into her grave in peace. Well, well, said the compassionate old man; if it would pain the relatives so greatly to have it done, he and M. Podevin would, of course, abandon the idea. It would be a satis-

faction to them both to be able to decide upon the cause of death, but they did not wish to proceed in it against the feelings of the family.

Sainteville woke up in the morning to a shock. Half the townspeople still believed that Miss Preen was leaving that day, Tuesday, for Boulogne; and to hear that she would not go on that journey, that she would never go on any earthly journey again, that she was *dead*, shook them to the centre.

What had been the matter with her?—what had killed her so quickly in the midst of life and health? Groups asked this; one group meeting another. "Inflammation," was the answer—for that report had somehow started itself. She caught a chill on the Sunday, probably when leaving the church after morning service; it induced speedy and instant inflammation, and she had died of it.

With softened steps and mournful faces hosts of people made their way to the Place Ronde. Only to take a glimpse at the outside of the Maison Rouge brought satisfaction to excited feelings. M. Gustave Sauvage had caused his white shop window blinds to be drawn half-way down, out of respect to the dead; all the windows above had the green persiennes closed before them. The calamity had so greatly affected old Madame Sauvage that she lay in bed.

When her sons returned indoors after the death had taken place, their mother called them to her room. Nancy's violent ringing had disturbed her, and she had lain since then in anxiety, waiting for news.

"Better not tell the mother to-night," whispered Emile to his brother outside her door.

But the mother's ears were quick, she was sitting up in bed, and the door was ajar. "Yes, you will tell me, my sons," she said. "I am fearing the worst."

"Well, mother, it is all over," avowed Gustave. "The attack was more violent than the one last night, and the poor lady is gone."

"May the good God have taken her to His Rest!" fervently aspirated madame. But she lay down in the bed in her distress and covered her face with the white-frilled pillow and sobbed a little. Gustave and Emile related a few particulars.

"And what was really the malady? What is it that she has died of?" questioned the mother, wiping her eyes.

"That is not settled; nobody seems to know," replied Gustave.

Madame Veuve Sauvage lay still, thinking. "I—hope—that—man—has—not—done—her—any—injury!" she slowly said.

"I hope not either; there is no appearance of it," said M. Gustave. "Anyway, mother, she had two skilful doctors with her, honest men and upright. Better not admit such thoughts."

"True, true," murmured madame, appeased. "I fear the poor dear lady must have taken a chill, which struck inwardly. That

handsome demoiselle, the cousin of Monsieur the Procureur, died of the same thing, you may remember. Good-night, my sons; you leave me very unhappy."

About eight o'clock in the morning, Monsieur Jules Cardiac heard of it. In going through the large iron entrance gates of the college to his day's work, he found himself accosted by one of two or three young gamins of pupils, who were also entering. It was Dion Pamart. The well-informed reader is of course aware that the French educational colleges are attended by all classes, high and low, indiscriminately.

"Monsieur, have you heard?" said the lad, with timid deprecation. "Mademoiselle is dead."

M. Jules Cardiac turned his eyes on the speaker. At first he did not recognise him: his own work lay with the advanced desks.

"Ah, c'est Pamart, n'est-ce-pas?" said he. "What did you say, my boy? Someone is dead?"

Dion Pamart repeated his information. The master, inwardly shocked, took refuge in disbelief.

"I think you must be mistaken, Pamart," said he.

"Oh, no, I'm not, sir. Mademoiselle was taken frightfully ill again last night, and they fetched my mother. They had two doctors to her and all; but they couldn't do anything for her, and she died. Grandmother gave me my breakfast just now; she said my mother was crying too much to come home. The other lady, the Captain's wife, has been in hysterics all night."

"Go on to your desks," commanded M. Cardiac to the small fry now gathered round him.

He turned back home himself. When he entered the salle-à-manger, Pauline was carrying away the last of the breakfast things. Her mistress stood putting a little water on a musk plant in the window.

"Is it you, Jules?" she exclaimed. "Have you forgotten something?"

M. Jules shut the door. "I have not forgotten anything," he answered. "But I have heard of a sad calamity, and I have come back to prepare you, Marie, before you hear it from others."

He spoke solemnly; he was looking solemn. His wife put down the jug of water on the table. "A calamity?" she repeated.

"Yes. You will grieve to hear it. Your friend, Miss Preen, was—was taken ill last night with the same sort of attack, but more violent; and she——"

"Oh, Jules, don't tell me, don't tell me!" cried Mary Cardiac, lifting her hands to ward off the words with a too sure prevision of what they were going to be.

"But, my dear, you must be told sooner or later," remonstrated he; "you cannot go through even this morning without hearing it from one person or another. Flore's boy was my informant. In

spite of all that could be done by those about her, poor lady—in spite of the two doctors who were called to her aid—she died."

Madame Cardiac was a great deal too much stunned for tears. She sank back in a chair with a face of stone, feeling that the room was turning upside down about her.

An hour later, when she had somewhat gathered her scattered senses together, she set off for the little Maison Rouge. Her way lay past the house of M. Podevin; old M. Dupuis was turning out of it as she went by. Madame Cardiac stopped.

"Yes," the Doctor said, when a few words had passed, "it is a most desolating affair. But, as madame knows, when Death has laid his grasp upon a patient, medical craft loses its power to resist him."

"Too true," murmured Mary Cardiac. "And what is it that she has died of?"

M. Dupuis shook his head to indicate that he did not know.

"I could have wished for an examination, to ascertain the true cause of the seizure," continued the Doctor, "and I come now from expressing my regrets to my confrère, M. Podevin. He agrees with me in deciding that we cannot press it in opposition to the family. Captain Fennel was quite willing it should take place, but his wife, poor distressed woman, altogether objects to it."

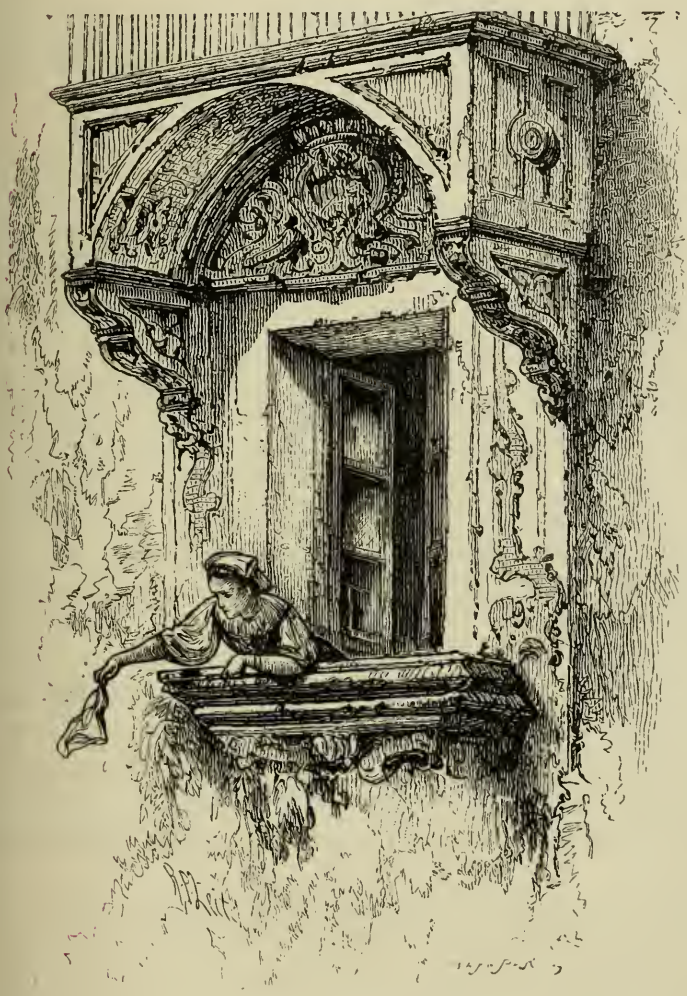
Mary Cardiac went on to the house of death. She saw Lavinia, looking so peaceful in her stillness. A happy smile sat on her countenance. On her white attire lay some sweet fresh primroses, which Flore had placed there. Lavinia loved primroses. She used to say that when she looked at them they brought to her mind the woods and dales of Buttermead, always carpeted with the pale, fair blossoms in the spring of the year. Mrs. Fennel lay in a heavy sleep, exhausted by her night of distress, Flore informed Madame Cardiac; and the Captain, anxious about her, was sitting in her room, to guard against her being disturbed.

On the next day, Wednesday, in obedience to the laws of France relating to the dead, Lavinia Preen was buried. All the English gentlemen in the town, and some Frenchmen, including M. Cardiac and the sons of Madame Veuve Sauvage, assembled in the Place Ronde, and fell in behind the coffin when it was brought forth. They walked after it to the portion of the cemetery consecrated to Protestants, and there witnessed the interment. The tears trickled down Charley Palliser's face as he took his last look into the grave, and he was honest enough not to mind who saw them.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

IN SUNNY CLIMES.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.



Stolen Pleasures.

SEE Naples and die has been said of old, as if the perfection of all that is beautiful in nature had then been attained, and nothing more was to be hoped for. But see Rome and die has also been said, which seems to bring us to a conflict of opinions. Whilst, in the third place, to George Sand nothing more beautiful in the world was to be found than the Tyrol; and George Sand had the greatest love for and appreciation of nature in all her moods.

Perhaps she was not very far wrong concerning the Tyrol. There is a beauty about it and a romance that can scarcely be found elsewhere. If its mountains have not the grandeur of those of Switzerland, they are more richly clothed, more undulating and diversified in outline. You have wonderful ravines and small mountain passes without number. Rushing torrents career wildly on their way, making everlasting music in your charmed ears. There is no lovelier sound in nature, except it be the murmur of the wind, sighing and surging through forest trees. And this, too, is a sound of water; not of rushing mighty water, but of the surging of the sea on the shore. There are links in the animal world, and this is one

of the links in the world of nature. Throw yourself down at midday on a forest greensward, close your eyes, and listen to the winds as they whisper amongst the tree tops, and you may fancy yourself on some far away sands revelling in the sound of the advancing tide.

But this will not apply to the Mediterranean, for it is tideless; and for the present we have to do with this tideless sea, and with no other.

Nowhere is it more beautiful than at Naples. No other bay, perhaps, has so grand an expanse; that matchless curve of thirty-five miles, bounded by hills and plains—fertile and luxuriant as any in the world.

Perhaps it is more for its surroundings, its environs, its excursions, that Naples is so famous, than for the attractions of the city itself. These, indeed, are rather doubtful. The Chiaja, with its waving trees, bounded on one side by imposing houses, on the other by the blue flashing waters, is a magnificent thoroughfare; but the streets of Naples are narrow, noisy and crowded.

It is, of course, a picturesque scene. Show me the town in Italy that is not more or less so. The people themselves cannot help being picturesque, however neglected their costume, however indolent their habits. Their towns follow their example. The tall houses have open balconies, tier above tier, and, in the poorer quarters, these balconies are decorated with clothes hung out to dry or to air. You might almost fancy them the only wardrobes the people possess. Very often the walls are frescoed. As if the perpetual sunshine were not sufficient, they must gild the rainbow and paint the butterfly's wing. The warmth of their imagination compels them to surround themselves with the brightest, most glaring colours. In England the effect would be hopelessly vulgar; but then the English are essentially prosy and matter-of-fact. Warmth of imagination and all that follows in its train is a sealed book to them; a mystery.

The crowded streets of Naples resemble the shifting scenes of a kaleidoscope. The people flash and dart about. There is no "order in their walking;" no "right of way." They jostle each other, but are in no wise put out. Now and then you hear a quarrel between two drivers, as loud and startling as it is quickly over. It is like a short, sharp thunderstorm, and clears the air. You would think that knives were about to be produced, and murder committed; but suddenly they whip up their horses, and away they tear in opposite directions, as if the very spirits of evil were in pursuit. Each may have a "fare" inside, and one of them may be hastening to catch a train; but all they can do is to fold their hands and sit like Patience smiling at Grief: not on a monument, but in an uncomfortable, ramshackle, rattling vehicle, that does its best to reduce you to a jelly. To attempt to stop a Neapolitan in his rage is a more hopeless task than to endeavour to stem the tide with a broom.

At all times the furious driving of the Neapolitans is proverbial. It is probably not to be equalled in any other town in the world. They rush up and down streets and across squares, and turn corners like a whirlwind. Here again there is no rule of road, no more system than in a stampede of wild horses in a pathless prairie.

And probably nowhere else are there such wonderful country carts, painted all the colours of the rainbow, with all sorts of wonderful signs and devices. What is yet more wonderful is the way in which these carts are laden with human freight. You will see a dozen in a vehicle that was never made to carry half that number. How they pack themselves is a mystery, but they are all the happier for their makeshift positions. Often, indeed, they are uproarious, and rival each other in shouting out bacchanalian songs. With them, as with a good many others, noise means happiness.

The heights about Naples add very much to its attractions. From them you obtain some of the finest views in the world. Naples itself is opened out before you, an endless extent of streets and houses. You see the three ports crowded with shipping; its quays lined with porters and touters waiting for their prey; a great part of them idle and dishonest, utterly worthless and unprincipled. They lounge about, and only show signs of activity when a steamer is approaching and they prepare to pounce upon some victim. These nuisances ought to be put down with the strong arm of the law, but they are not; and through them, and through the almost more intolerable nuisance of the beggars, whose name is legion, the Neapolitans have received a bad name they by no means deserve.

The true Neapolitan is industrious and very hard-working; he often battles with adverse circumstances in a manner that does him infinite credit. No doubt that happy spirit, that light-hearted temperament, that habit of taking things as they come, has much to do with it. For the Neapolitan is "toujours gai," as the French song has it; and in that respect he is very much like his far-off French brother.

One of the most interesting buildings on the heights of Naples is the Convent of San Martino. It was formerly inhabited by monks of the Carthusian order, but its halls and corridors now respond a mournful silence only. All the beauty of architecture remains: the magnificent cloisters; the picturesque and inevitable well; the small cemetery where dead-and-gone monks have returned to dust and sleep in peace.

Here chartreuse will be offered you, and the aubergiste in the restaurant outside the sacred precincts will tell you it is still made here.

For my own part I only believe in that which comes from the mother establishment in the Alps of Dauphiné. There you may find the monks still flourishing in their stronghold, their distillery in full operation; and from thence they send their liqueur, which might tempt a saint to transgression, all over the world. It is one of

STREET OF THE FORUM, POMPEII.

the loveliest excursions in existence, this to the Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse. I have seen it, the surrounding Alps, the long, solitary but exquisite drive, crowned with summer's laughing verdure, and winter's chilling snows, and I know not which is fairer, which the lovelier picture. But in the merry month of May, it possesses a charm that has long become silent when the snows begin to fall: the charm of the nightingale's song. Night and day the woods and groves echo and re-echo with this lovely music, to which no earthly pen or poet can do justice. It must be heard to be realised, like all other things that are perfect.

We have mentioned the Chiaja, and passing onwards beyond the town, you come to the wonderful Grotto di Posilipo, a tunnel that goes back to the remote history of the place. It was mentioned as early as the days of Nero, and no doubt existed long before. A new one has now been made, and is pleasanter to travel through; but the old one is more interesting by reason of its antiquity. It is 750 yards long, and upon entering it you seem to be about to encounter some unknown doom. Above the west archway might well be inscribed "All those who enter here leave hope behind." The aspect of the place, the sensation it produces, are weird in the extreme. In the old days—those good old times when witches lived and flourished, and magicians held sway, and Aladdin's Lamp had not been lost, and all the wonders of the Arabian Nights had not yet become matters of history—in those good old times its existence was ascribed to magic. In these degenerate days we shall ascribe it to other causes. It is lighted by gas lamps hung from the sides and the roof. These almost make the darkness greater, and certainly add to the weird and gloomy look of the tunnel.

Passing out from this you come to a suburb of Naples which is one of the strangest and dreariest in the world—the village of Fuorigrotta. It seems densely populated and the houses are small and irregular. Many of them are blacksmiths' forges, and many a patient animal was waiting to be shod as we passed on our way.

All this ended in a long, straight, dull road, which made one feel not near Naples, not in sunny Italy, but in some unknown country where man had hardly yet penetrated. There were straggling vine yards on either side, but the grapes had been gathered and there were few signs of care or cultivation about them. The road seemed interminable. I thought we had turned our backs upon Naples for ever; whilst Mauleverer kept consulting his watch and wondering whether we should see the Grand Hotel and the table d'hôte that night. Our driver was the very essence of stolidity, could not be persuaded to turn, could not be made to understand that there were limits to endurance.

"Do you think he is going to Rome?" asked Mauleverer; and from his peculiar intonation I thought his words had a double meaning in them, but I passed it over very properly in silent contempt.

And the road came to an end at last, and turning to the left, soon we entered the road of the Vomero, and the most wonderful views of sea and land burst upon our astonished and delighted vision. The miserable road we had just left must have been made to serve as a contrast to what we now beheld. It was passing from purgatory to Paradise; from without the gates of Eden to within them.

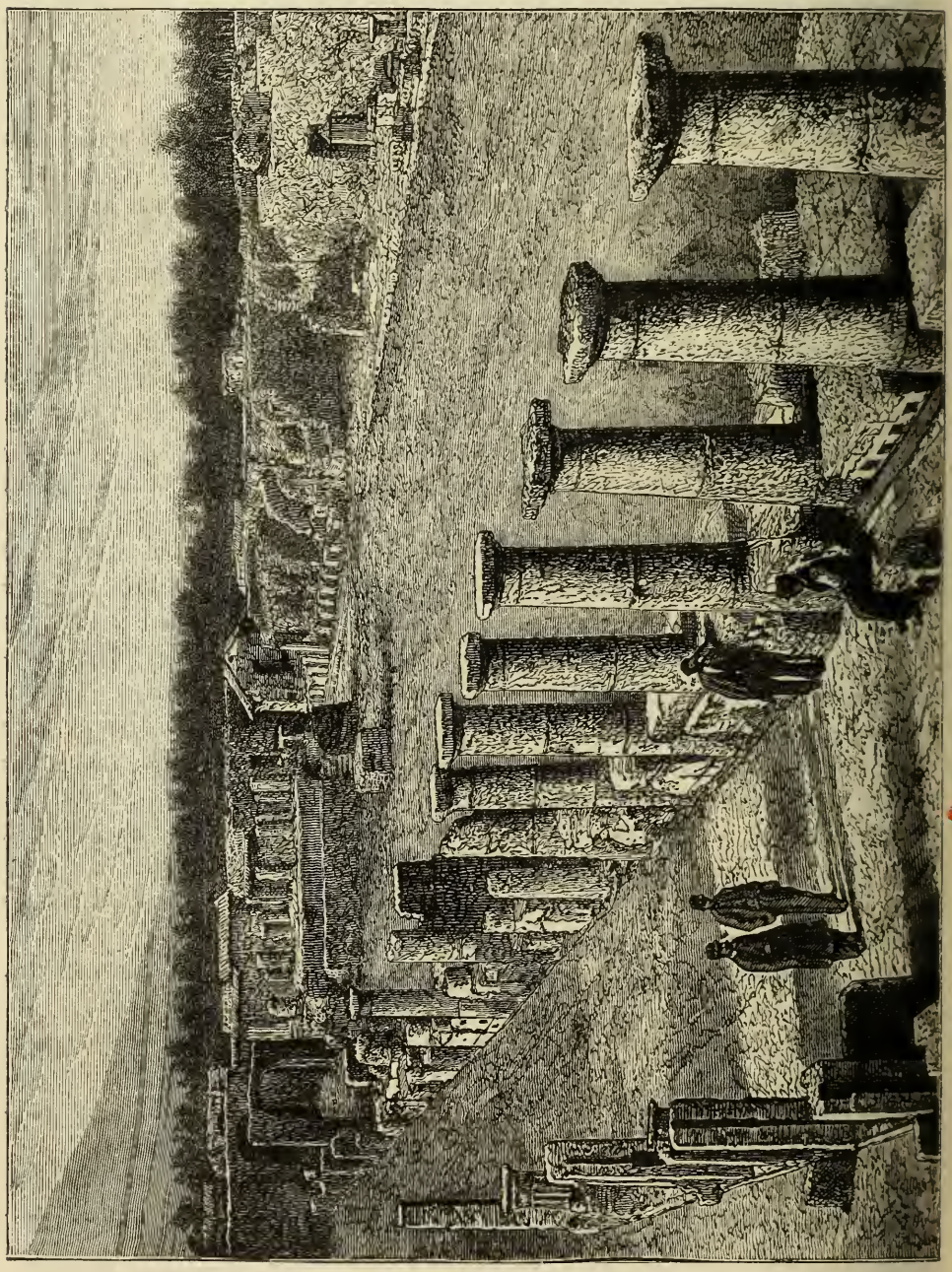
The shades of evening were falling, and the sea was of the deepest blue. The lovely Capo di Posilipo formed a small and exquisite harbour, one of the gems of the Mediterranean. Beyond, separated from us by a strip of sea, a small island uprose out of the water, rock-like and defiant, yet verdant and singularly beautiful. It was crowned by ruins which might well have existed in the earliest days of Naples. Yet those earliest days would take us back to the Greek period, and many centuries before the Christian era. Subsequently Naples fell into the possession of the Romans, the Goths, the Normans, the Spaniards, the Austrians, the House of Savoy, besides other dynasties which need not be named. Then, in 1860, Garibaldi entered Naples, and there proclaimed Victor Emmanuel king of Italy. And so Naples, like Italy itself, entered upon a new reign, and, we will hope, one to be long and prosperous.

Here we began to ascend, until rising far above the sea-level we looked down upon a matchless panorama of sea and land. The wonderful Castle of Puzzuoli stood out magnificently from the midst of the waters. We had indeed commenced the drive by visiting—just before entering the grotto—classic ground in the form of Virgil's tomb. But as the house shown at Brindisi may or may not have been the house in which Virgil died, so there appears to be some doubt as to whether this tomb actually contains the ashes of the poet. That he died at Brundusium, and desired to be buried in Naples, where he had lived and which he so loved, seems undoubted; therefore, perhaps, it is better to accept as certain these supposed traces and remains.

The tomb consists of a small chamber lighted by two windows. The roof is arched, and in the walls are niches to contain urns. The exterior is covered with ivy, which gives the tomb rather a sad and sombre aspect; but it is a fitting resting-place for the great writer. One can only regret the last journey he undertook, to meet Augustus at Athens: a journey from which he was never to return alive.

That evening, when we entered Naples, the sun had gone down. The shades of night had gathered, the lights of the town were flashing; Vesuvius had changed his black pillar of smoke, chiefly visible by day, for lurid tongues of flame which flashed upwards and disappeared and reappeared, as if thirsting for some special prey. It was a sharp descent just before entering the town; the roadway was lively with people hurrying to and fro. Many restaurants were lighted up, and they were rapidly filling as the dinner-hour approached. One could imagine the scene. Rooms crowded with men and women;

lively with noise and laughter; dark, flashing eyes that gleamed and glowed, and could look tender or fierce at will, languishing or repellent according to the mood of their possessors, who live only in



emotion. Loud voices are de rigueur: the Italians are nothing if not loud; and perhaps when they are loudest they are least dangerous.

By the roadside there were picturesque stalls kept by equally picturesque vendors: stalls artistically arranged, lighted up with cunningly devised lanterns which threw out shadows with weird and

ıost telling effect. The faces of the girls in their costumes: some ‹earing the well-known Neapolitan head-dress, others with nothing ıdorning their small, shapely heads but simply braided hair: were

LAST DAY OF POMPEII.

ought out in vivid relief by these flambeaux and lanterns; faces pretty and sparkling as their white teeth gleamed and their dark ‹es flashed, that one longed for the genius of a Schalcken to im-ıortalise them upon canvas.

All passed away, and we came down to the level of the sea, or

very nearly so, and found ourselves on the Chiaja. It was quite dark now, and Mauleverer, striking his repeater, found we had only five minutes' grace before table d'hôte would commence.

But we were even now at the hotel, and in a moment found ourselves within its pleasant portals. The Grand Hotel at Naples always strikes me as being one of the perfect hotels of the world. It is so well organised, so quietly managed, so admirably appointed, that it is worth visiting Naples only to stay there. Its situation at the end of the Chiaja, looking down the broad thoroughfare, could not be improved.

The whole Bay lies stretched before you. Within a few feet of you the blue waters toss and splash against the stonework of the shore. Right in front of you is Vesuvius, ever smoking and flaming. Far out across the bay is Capri with its three peaks, beautiful, hazy and romantic as a vision of another Kuble Khan: and in truth there are caverns about here "measureless to man." In the intense heat of the day you can rest in the shade upon the balcony, or sit behind partially-closed shutters, and watch the white winged boats upon the water disporting themselves in a nameless bliss; you can feast your eyes upon all this illimitable stretch of dark blue sea and sky; you may watch the flashing sunlight until your eyes grow weary, and close, and drowsiness steals over you and yields to insensibility; and you pass out of this land of real enchantment into one of yet greater marvels; you dream such dreams that when you wake you almost wish they could have lasted for ever.

It is certain that the more you know of Naples the more you will love it; but no doubt the same may be said of every beautiful spot on earth. Yet it is less for itself, its streets, its museums, its churches and picture galleries, that Naples is so charming, as for the innumerable excursions that may be made from this centre; beginning with Pompeii and ending with the famous Ruins of Pæstum.

One of the noisiest and most characteristic drives is that to Pompeii. You may also take the train, and it is a question which is the better plan of the two. In driving you see more, but it takes longer and is more tiring. The return journey is apt to grow monotonous: your coachman grows so sleepy that many extra prods are necessary to wake him up to a sense of his duties. The road, too, has been cut up by tramways, and every now and then you feel as if a wheel were being wrenched off or a spring had given way. Lumbering cars come swooping down upon you, and you might declare that nothing could save you; but the driver turns off at the very exact moment; not a moment too soon, and not an inch of room to spare. The tram-driver shoots you a laughing and wicked glance out of his eyes, touches his cap, evidently enjoys the slight anxiety you have been in, and is proud of the result.

Truly the only thing in Naples is to take life calmly and coolly and with the philosophy of a stoic exclaim, "Come what come may!"

A prolonged sojourn in any other frame of mind would turn one's hair grey. And after all, nothing ever does happen, as far as one hears or sees. They go on in their reckless way day after day and year after year, and their very courage and boldness carry them through all dangers and difficulties.

The dangers, indeed, arise from causes less easily guarded against; they are insidious, silent and unseen. Miasma and Malaria, which often bring fever, ending in death. Thus it seems that all nature, like mankind, has a duality of character.

The drive from Naples to Pompeii is one long series of suburbs; one long, almost unbroken chain of houses. Many of them are small, and you see a great deal of the humble life on your way. Wine shops abound, where they drink the wine of the country, or carry it home in small flasks for their dinners. And even in this trifling matter, how much more of refinement and the picturesque is there in these artistically made flasks, filled with the sparkling liquid, than in the familiar jug or pewter tankard with which our very uninteresting men and women in England may be seen armed at midday, hurrying through prosaic streets, disappearing down gloomy areas, or up dark, tortuous and suicidal staircases!

But on the road to Pompeii you have the two extremes of life. There are immense buildings which are the palaces of the nobles. They have a history and have stood long through storm and tempest, social and political. Some have passed away into meaner hands and are degraded to the level of lodging houses: and where once comely men and graceful dames were wont to tread the halls and corridors, now you may find a congregation of twenty families to whom grace and courtliness are unknown terms. Many of the windows are protected with strong iron bars, signs of a bygone age of revolutions and civil strifes, and a lawlessness which often meant possession to the strongest.

But many of these palaces are still flourishing. As you pass them through the great gateways, you obtain glimpses of lovely sunny gardens that look like Paradise; orange groves and almond trees full of blossom and beauty sloping down to the very edge of the dark blue waters. These glimpses are absolute dreams of enchantment, all the more effective for passing so soon: just like those wonderful glimpses that you have of the Moselle as the train flashes past them like a meteor on its way between Paris and Strasburg: glimpses that in very truth make you feel as if another Eden for a moment had been opened to you.

But, after all, the world is full of Edens: there are countless spots of which one might say with truth, Earth has nothing fairer. It is a question of comparison more than of degree. Our moods also count for something, frail, uncertain mortals that we are. Our very conception of the beautiful depends upon our moral and physical health; and what delights us one day, the next may cease to charm.

To the unfamiliar eye, the most curious sight on the road to Pompeii is the making and drying of maccaroni. In certain places, especially towards the end of your drive, you will see long rows of maccaroni hung upon wooden frames. You wonder how the drying process is done. The long yellow threads droop downwards, one row beneath another. They are exposed to all the wind, all the dust that blows. Of the latter there seems enough to supply the world, with a little over. A glimpse inside the factories is sufficient. They are not tempting: they certainly do not look clean; but this is a matter of indifference to the Neapolitan, who knows nothing of the good old proverb that tells us "Cleanliness is next to Godliness;" or, if he does, certainly has no faith in it. It is said that the less we know of the making of maccaroni the better. And in Naples they have not even the merit of dressing it well, for Neapolitan maccaroni is an unsavoury mess.

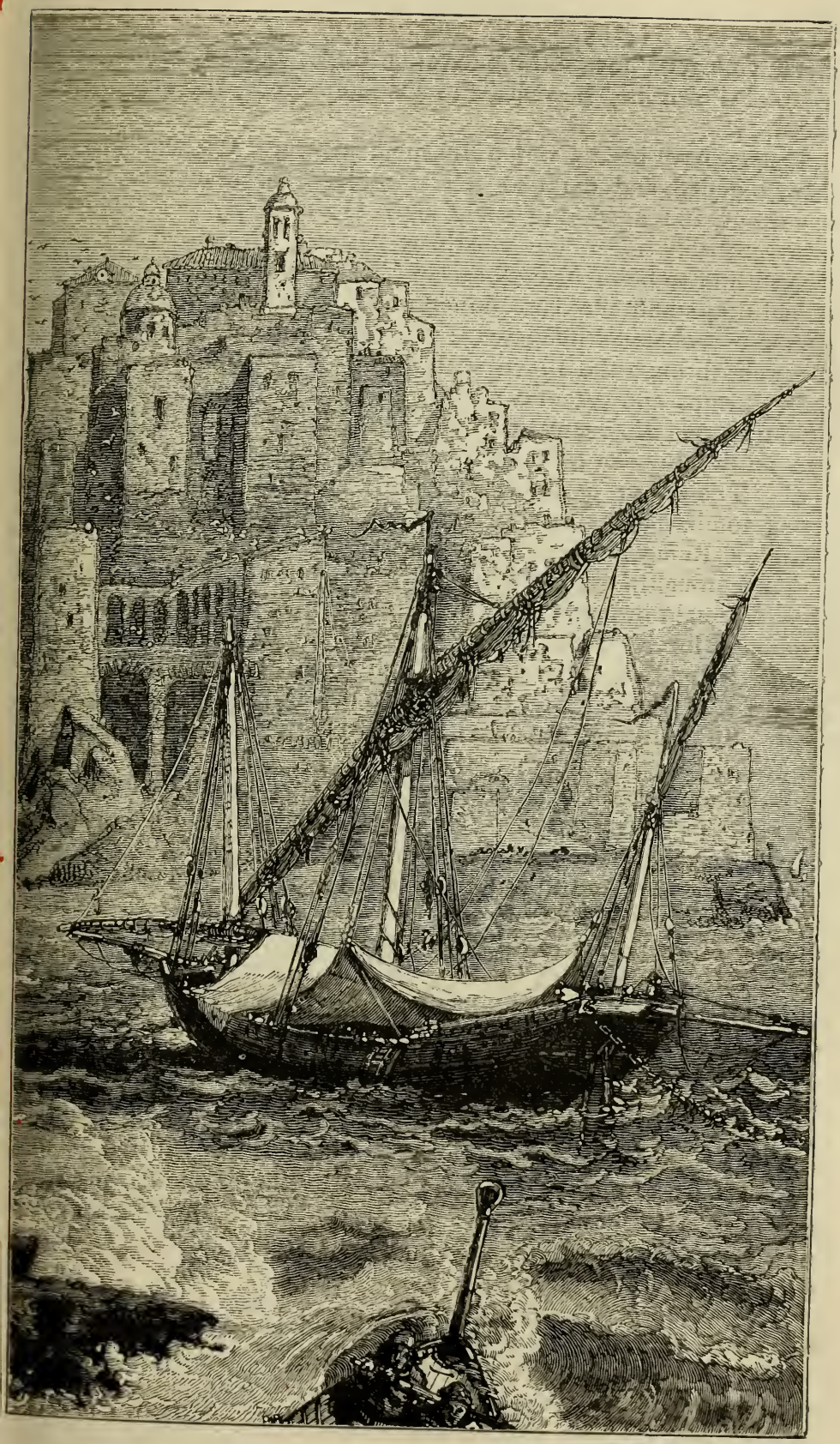
But these maccaroni-frames give so much more colouring to what is already a very lively scene, and when you have passed away it remains in the mind as one of the most distinctive features of the drive: that, and your resolve to pass the maccaroni that night at dinner; a resolve certain to be broken if it is prepared *not* à la Neapolitaine.

After all this life and movement, Pompeii, when you reach it, seems twice a city of the dead. As you pace her ruined streets, an intense melancholy "marks you for her own." It is said that in visiting Tangiers you have life and a condition of things exactly as they were a thousand years ago; certainly it would seem so; and in Pompeii you are taken back at once to the days of its fall.

Two hundred years ago not a vestige of Pompeii had been discovered. A century ago very little had been unburied. What has been excavated is exactly in the state it was found. Fragments have been removed; marble statues, antique lamps, petrified human remains; but the broad outlines are untouched.

There are the very frescos upon the walls, many of them still fresh and vivid. The streets, once as thronged and busy as those of Naples of to-day, are just as they were centuries ago. The very jars that held their wine and oil, the mills that ground their corn, still remain as evidences of what once was. I know nothing sadder and more impressive than these ruins of Pompeii. Chains of hills surround them, separated by the wide plain, and Vesuvius overshadows them, and for ever sends up its warning that it may any day again do likewise. But as far as Pompeii is concerned, it would have lost its sting. No life now lives within its walls, save the watchmen who guard this city of the dead. Much has been excavated, but more remains to be done. Yet when the whole is unburied, the effect will scarcely be more complete than it is now.

In romance, we have nothing more enthralling than Bulwer's "Last Days"; and in real life nothing more touching than the record



THE CASTLE, PUZZUOLI.

of the younger Pliny, and his devotion to his mother, whom, at the risk of his own life, he refused to abandon. Yet who would not do likewise?

It must have been a very awful moment, when the sun was suddenly clouded and darkness fell at midday. The mother of Pliny was stout and aged, and could only move slowly. To him this delay probably meant the difference between life and death. She begged him to leave her to her fate, but he would not. The ashes rained down and the lava flowed; they were suffocated by fumes, almost overwhelmed by cinders; but hand in hand the mother and son went through the streets of Pompeii; and they form one of the most devoted and pathetic pictures in history. One loves to think of the virtues of the mother who could inspire such devotion in a son, and of the worth of the son who was found true in his hour of trial. The reward came also, for whilst so many were buried in that living tomb, mother and son escaped with their lives to the little "City of Refuge," where they were saved and sheltered.

To thoroughly appreciate the spirit and sentiment of Pompeii, one should remain in its neighbourhood and visit it every day for a week. There are lovely resting places round about, of which Castellamare is one of the best. At Pompeii itself there is no sufficiently good inn. From Castellamare, too, you can make many excursions, taking Sorrento, Capri, and Amalfi with its lovely monastery and matchless views.

But these may all be abiding places, if you like to make them so. Sorrento, with its deep ravines and fertile plains, and mountain excursions; where waterfalls "each unto the other calls." The birds sing in the trees, and the trees are laden with fruit and blossom, and a thousand perfumes are thrown upon the air. Here Tasso was born, and here he returned to his sister after his long captivity in Ferrara, disguised as a shepherd, in order that his sudden appearance might not startle her too greatly. But no disguise could hide him from the eyes that had lingered for him for so many years, and when she saw him she knew him; and, like Joseph of old when before Benjamin, she probably fell upon his neck and wept.

One loves to gather together all these separate and rarely recorded evidences of human constancy and devotion: the "faithfulness unto death;" the love that would lay down its life for another; whether it be parental or filial, the love of man for woman, or the strong love of an eternal friendship, rarest of all, and all too rare, as Shelley declares.

The journey from Sorrento to Capri is only two hours by boat in fair weather; and it is one of the loveliest sails imaginable.

It is doubtful whether, after all, any view quite comes up to the view from Capri, whence you gaze upon the wonderful panorama of Naples and its bay, Pompeii and Vesuvius, the shores of Sorrento and Castellamare, the chains of hills with their varied and graceful

undulations, the blue flashing waters reflecting the calm blue sky. I have heard it said more than once by old and far distant travellers, that they have never seen anything in the world quite to equal this magnificent and apparently boundless view, with its graceful outlines and altogether marvellous composition.

Perhaps Capri itself is a slight flaw in the picture, for, in the matter of inns, you cannot be very comfortable; mais il faut souffrir pour être beau; and in travelling we cannot always sleep upon rose-leaves or indulge in nectar and ambrosia. But it is well, even here, to have "ups and downs," lights and shades, la pluie et le beau temps. No sky is so beautiful as that which is flecked and varied by clouds, so they be of the right sort: those clouds that might be compared to angels' wings, as they drift gently across the sky and seem to fold themselves to rest whilst imperceptibly dissolving in ether; clouds that are neither dark nor "big with omen."

And Capri itself is soon explored. It is not much more than a great cultivated rock rising sharply out of the water, presenting alternate features of barrenness and luxuriant vegetation. Very fertile is it in its way, very industrious its people. It supplies grapes for the famous wine of the country, to which it gives its name; it has many orange groves and olive yards. But olive trees will grow in very barren spots, and live for ever.

The climate of Capri is better and more healthy than that of Naples. Great quantities of flowers are found here, and in spring and autumn it is largely invaded by quails. These birds, it is said, furnish the bishop of the island with the greater part of his revenue. In this small island you feel in the midst of the sea, very close to the water; and there is something specially attractive in the waters of the Mediterranean. I fancy there must be some truth in the legend of the Syrens, and that they are still there; still tempting men to their fate by an influence not less powerful because it is unseen. In this upper world the quietest influences are the greatest, the quietest people have most power. It may be so under the waves and waters of the Levant.

You say farewell to Capri and you go back to Sorrento; and as you came to it by a little sailing boat, so it pleases you to return in the same way. Then the spirit moves you to go on to Amalfi, and here you are in a somewhat new world. The historical interest here is mediæval, and even yet more remote. It has had a great past, and once ranked as the fifth city in the kingdom. It is now a city of factories in a small way, where the best maccaroni in the world is said to be made.

One of the chief objects of interest is the Monastery of the Capucins, a quarter of an hour's rough climbing from the beach. It was founded in the thirteenth century, and was endowed by Frederick II. After occupying it for two hundred years it was abandoned by the Capucins, fell into partial ruin, to be restored again in the six-

teenth century. It passed through vicissitudes and is now a naval school. The beauty of its architecture remains. But the monks who in the old days were wont to meet the visitor at the small gate leading into the precincts—and which have been placed in the frontispiece to the current number of the *Argosy*, partly for pic turesque effect, chiefly to indicate what once has been—these monks tread the corridors of the Canonica no more. They have had their day.

But this convent is inferior in interest to that of the great Benedictine Monastery of La Cava, situated some miles away from La Cava itself. It dates back to the eleventh century, and like so many of the greater monasteries, is buried in the mountains and surrounded by woods. But these wild spots of gloomy but intense grandeur add the greatest possible charm to those who visit them to-day. Perhaps even the monks of old were wise in their choice: if they must withdraw from the world, better that it should be done completely. Half measures never lead to good results. The walk from Amalfi to the Monastery is very lovely and interesting, and gives you wonderful glimpses of the sea. Here, too, in days not very far off, monks would greet the visitor, with cowl and cloak and sandalled shoon; and show him many of the inexhaustible treasures of the convent. It possesses forty thousand parchment rolls, sixty thousand MSS. and many other treasures that a whole lifetime could scarcely investigate. Here Tasso was wont to come, when probably he wanted special rest and quiet for his work. And in the village below, Salvator Rosa is said to have lived.

The day after our visit to Amalfi, we entered Naples amidst a deluge of rain. That night, all night long, the lightning flashed and played about the heavens, and the thunder crashed and rolled about the heights and hills, echoing from point to point with a force and grandeur that were terrific and sublime. One moment the whole town, the heights, would be lighted up with a blue, intense blaze, clear as daylight; the next moment, utter darkness and silence, succeeded by appalling crashes. The rain came down in torrents, as if the very waterspouts of heaven had been opened. The streets were deserted, the windows seemed all barred and closed. We, on our balcony, appeared the only watchers of the sublime scene. For even Mauleverer, who believes not in romance, and despises everything that is emotional, admitted the grandeur of the storm. The whole heavens seemed at times ablaze with lightning; the whole earth seemed full of sound; that lurid light, that crashing sound. which might well be about to herald in the end of all things.

Long we watched and never tired, until the fury was past and the storm had spent itself. Then nature, like a fractious child, tear-stained and repentant, went to rest, and we followed her example.

The next morning there was no sound or trace of last night's rage and battle of the elements. No trace except that freshness which

lay upon all things, and a certain clearness of atmosphere which sharpened the outlines of the hills, and made Capri, across the water, more conspicuous and distinct than we had yet seen it. Vesuvius was smoking as usual; neither more nor less; as if storms and convulsions of nature were nothing to her. Of the latter she may possibly possess the secret and the controlling; and her storms are more to be dreaded than those which come to us from the air.

It was a glorious morning. The sun shone and flashed upon the blue waters of the Mediterranean. Everything spoke peace and harmony. One longed to stay here for days and weeks; but it could not be. From our breakfast table—a picture in its way—we looked upon the fairer picture of the Bay of Naples, framed by our window.

And presently we got up, and I felt that almost the pleasantest chapter in our journey was over as Mauleverer exclaimed:

"Now for Rome!"

A LOVE LETTER.

A KNIGHT rode past the convent wall;
  On something hidd'n a sunbeam shone;
He prayed for rest in bower and stall,
The careful Abbess—noting all—
  Treated him well—and he rode on.

A dove perched on the convent wall,
  And something showed beneath her wing;
She preened and cooed with plaintive call;
The careful Abbess—noting all—
  Stroked, and let fly the gentle thing.

A rose dropped o'er the convent wall,
  With something curled about its heart;
It lay a scented, crimson ball;
The careful Abbess—noting all—
  Had softly pulled its leaves apart.

A Palmer by the convent wall
  Leaned—while the Abbess slept at noon;
The novice, setting plates in hall,
Reached him a pitcher—that was all—
  He blessed the maid and passed full soon.

Ah, steep and high the convent wall,
  Yet something slips thro' lock and chain;
The maid has fled beyond recall—
May Saints forgive her grievous fall—
  Nor let the Abbess nap again!

G. B. STUART.

"KITLINGS FOR HIS REVERENCE."

MR. WILLIAMSON, the kindly, charitable rector of a remote parish in Tyrone, was consulted by his own flock upon matters spiritual and temporal, but more especially upon the latter; and by the flocks of priest and minister upon their worldly cares and interests. He was a notable farmer, and in truth was just as glad to prescribe for the sick horse or cow of a Roman Catholic or Presbyterian as of a Churchman. He was an easy-going humorist—one who enjoyed the foibles of his fellow creatures, extracting amusement and much food for laughter out of them.

To see him rub his plump hands as he told a quaint anecdote did your very heart good. He had never had an enemy, and even in Land League times, lived on the old comfortable footing with his neighbours, who numbered among them greedy tenants, seditious Nationalists, war-like Orangemen and panic-stricken Protestants. How came it that he managed to live in such comfort?

Let us premise that he was not a landlord, but had a good sum of money in the funds, consequently his income was secure whatever happened. And for the rest he was a Gallio! Careless of the fierce excitements that shook his world, he took religion and politics lightly, was neither spiritually-minded enough to care for differences of belief, nor combative enough to dispute about politics. In fact, the opinions that have convulsed the world were nothing to him: he cared only to have his laugh comfortably. He was a middle-aged bachelor in 1883, looked after in his snug rectory by two old servants, Ned Gilmore and his wife Matty, both as great characters as their master.

As Mr. Williamson sat one day in his study, culling appropriate passages from several volumes of sermons and weaving them into a discourse, he heard a ring at the hall-door, and Matty presently entered the room with a basket in her hand.

"What is it, Matty?" asked her master.

"It's Mrs. Morrow, wi' a little kitling for your reverence. She heered tell that we were polluted wi' rats an' mice."

"Very kind of her. Thank her cordially for me, and treat the kitten well."

Exit Matty with the kitten. Another ring, another parley in shrill tones at the hall-door, and re-enter Matty with a second basket.

"Well, Matty?"

"It's Jane Moroney, wi' a little kitling for you, sir, to help to banish the mice."

"Oh, indeed; very kind of her. My best thanks, and let it go in the yard."

The ring, the shrill colloquy and the incursion of Matty were all repeated an hour later, but the old dame now burst into her master's presence with a basket on each arm, laughing quietly.

"It's the priest's Bridget an' the minister's Nancy, wi' kitlings for your reverence."

"All right, Matty. You know what to say for me. But see here: if more presents come don't bring them to the study, or I shall be preaching about kittens next Sunday."

The sermon did not progress, for loud and discordant sounds reached the Rector's ears, and he rang his bell sharply.

"What is that dreadful noise about, Matty?"

"Troth, your reverence, it's them kitlings fighting. The priest's kitling an' the minister's kitling does naething but fly at other. Twa wee divils!"

"Ha! ha! That's only natural, Matty: that might be expected. Call them Brian Boru and William Wallace, and let them finish their little difference out in the yard."

One morning Mr. Williamson received a letter which pleased him, and he summoned Matty and Ned to the breakfast parlour for a conference regarding it.

"An old schoolfellow and college friend proposes to pay me a visit. His sheets must be well aired; he must have the best room, and we must lay in every delicacy of the season for him. He wonders if it is safe for him to venture among us; the papers give such a frightful account of Ireland. He hopes outrages are not common in my parish. Eh, Ned?" and the Rector's eyes twinkled.

The guest duly arrived, was warmly welcomed, and an excellent dinner was smoking on the table, to which he was doing justice, when Ned bustled into the dining-room exclaiming: "There's no oyster sauce for the turbot, sir, because Brian Boru an' William Wallace was murderin' other in the yard, an' Matty went to separate them, an' the sauce was burnt."

"Eh, eh! That's too bad! But I suppose it can't be helped. Hand Mr. St. John the fish sauce and cayenne pepper."

Mr. St. John, a quiet, matter-of-fact Englishman, cast a surprised and startled glance at his host, but said nothing. He, however, merely toyed with his turbot.

A roast replaced the fish, and Mr. Williamson began to carve, remarking that his friend's long drive ought to have given him an appetite. A hubbub now reached their ears from without, and the shrill tones of Matty were audible in the passage.

"Och, Ned, he's dead; the life's beaten out o' him. Brian has murdered him."

The English guest straightway laid down his knife and fork, his hair standing on end.

"What's that Matty says?" asked the Rector, calmly, when Ned re-appeared in the dining-room.

"It's Brian has killed William Wallace, your reverence. Matty's lamenting, but 'deed it's small matter, for he was a regular divil."

"Well, where is the corpse?"

"Stretched out on the kitchen floor, sir."

"Eh! It will go hard with William Wallace, I suppose," smiled Mr. Williamson. "Some more beef, St. John?"

This was more than the guest could bear. "Williamson!" he cried, "a murdered man is brought into your house, and laid out on your kitchen floor, and you coolly ask me to have some more beef! This is a shocking country."

The Rector lay back in his chair, and absolutely roared with laughter. "Oh, my side!" he gasped. "Oh, St. John, you'll be the death of me! A murdered man! It is you who are the murderer. You will kill me. My side!" and his paroxysms of mirth went nigh to suffocate him. "Why, sir, your murdered man is a cat," and then followed the explanation.

But Mr. St. John's nerves had received a shock, and he did not much enjoy his stay in Tyrone. He asked timid questions as he and his host walked or drove about the parish. "Do you see that man yonder, near the hedge? Is that a gun he has?"

Mr. Williamson glanced in the direction indicated. "Not at all, my dear fellow—that's a pitchfork—the man is flourishing his fork about and gossiping and idling instead of working; more Hibernice, that's all."

"I assure you it looked exactly as if he were levelling a gun at you. Have you been fired at often?"

"Oh, no! About once a month or so—nothing to speak of! One gets used to everything, you know."

"My goodness! You do take things coolly. Thank God, I don't live in this dreadful, savage country."

Perhaps this little conversation put a mischievous scheme into the Rector's waggish brain; but at any rate when his guest retired that night, he summoned Ned to the study, and said, with twinkling eyes: "Wouldn't it be a pity to let Mr. St. John leave Ireland without an adventure?"

Ned's old eyes responded.

"An innocent sort of an outrage, you know, Ned. Could we put a canny, trustworthy man to lie in wait in some lonely place, and let off my blunderbuss near him, eh?"

"We could, your reverence! Faix an' troth, we just could."

"Not to hit him, of course: only to frighten him, and give him something to say about us when he goes back to England."

"I understand, sir; we want to gie' him a wee scare. We'll do it, an' I'm the boy for 't!" And the old villain chuckled with delight. The remainder of the conference was whispered.

Mr. St. John took leave of Matty next morning with silver tokens of regard, and courteous speeches, and climbed to his place in the

log-cart beside his host. "Where is your husband?" he asked. "I aw you lift my portmanteau—too heavy for you."

"Not at all, sir; not at all. Ned's away, doing an errand for the naster."

"Ah! Please give him this from me," handing her a small packet, vhich, when opened, was seen to contain half a sovereign. Matty's smile broadened on making this discovery, and she muttered: "'Deed he's a decent gentleman—*very* decent—'deed and troth it's a pity to frighten the likes o' him: but sure his reverence has the innocent wit, an' sure Ned *be* to do what his reverence bids him."

"A quaint old soul, Matty," remarked Mr. St. John, as they drove off. "I had been told of the drollery of Irish servants. I presume she and her husband are trustworthy—not Land Leaguers? They won't betray you, Williamson?"

"Land Leaguers! Betray me! Ha, ha! If they could but hear you, my good fellow! They are Orange to the back-bone. Matty hates a Papist like poison, and if Ned does not go quite so far, it is because of his bonhomie and sense of humour; for he is a droll dog, I assure you."

"Where is he to-day?"

"Oh, he is employed upon a little secret service for me. By the way (hastily turning the conversation), I have known Matty longer than Ned. She was my sole domestic when I first took up house. I had to leave home for a fortnight on one occasion, and I found she was afraid to stay alone in the house. I tried to get a Protestant woman to keep her company during my absence, but could only find a Roman Catholic. Here was a dilemma. I called the two women before me, and addressed them solemnly, begging them to be good friends, and advising them, in furtherance of that end, not to mention the subject of religion during the fortnight. A week, ten days, twelve days, were passed in the greatest amity, but on the thirteenth the Roman Catholic could restrain herself no longer.

"'There's one thing I'm sure of,' she said, 'King William's in the bad place.'

"'That canna be,' replied Matty, promptly: 'I always heered tell that the bad place was so full of popes that there'd be nae room for him.' Ready of Matty, was it not?"

Mr. St. John gave a dry chuckle, without appreciation in it. In fact he did not enjoy driving on Irish roads, and was secretly congratulating himself that he would soon take a final leave of the dangerous country.

"There are as strong Protestants as Matty in my parish," the rector proceeded. "For instance, there's a shoemaker who mends my boots. He assures me that 'Catholics do very well for *soles*, but it is a mistake to put them in for *uppers*.' Said cobbler has a fund of dry humour and apt illustration at his command."

"There must be an immensity of bad feeling among you," said

Mr. St. John, uneasily glancing over his shoulder at the hedges they were passing.

"Yes, to be sure," replied his friend, nonchalantly; "but it has its comical side. There's a flourishing Orange Lodge in the parish, very strict as to the members it admits. We have a widow in the village with two sons. She is a Church woman, but her husband, long dead, was a Roman Catholic, and thus it was that the sons were baptised by the priest. The father intended them to be brought up in his own faith, but he died, and then the mother made Protestants of them. Last week one of these boys, aged eighteen, asked a neighbour to propose him at the Lodge, but as he had been baptised a Roman Catholic they would not admit him. When this grievous answer was taken to him, he burst out crying, and turning to his mother said reproachfully, 'Mother, what made you marry a Papist?' Not bad, eh?"

No reply; and the Rector perceived that his friend had not listened to one word of his anecdote. "I say, Williamson, is not this a very lonely road?" he asked timidly.

It *was* a lonely road. They had reached a stretch of bog—cold and black, with inky pools every here and there, and bleak stone walls along the road—no hedges, no furze bushes; not a single human being was in sight.

Stop! There *was* one human head visible! Mr. Williamson spied a battered old hat well known to him topping the wall precisely in the spot he expected to see it, and he drove more slowly "It is a ticklish place, St. John, old fellow," he said thoughtfully "just the place for an outrage."

No sooner were the words out of his lips than there was a shot fired, succeeded by a wild yell, and the Rector, with every appearance of lively alarm, plied his whip, and made his old horse rattle along the road.

"What was that?" asked poor Mr. St. John, pale as death, when they drew rein near the railway station.

"Well, my good fellow," replied the waggish Rector, with preternatural gravity, "it seems fated that you were not to leave Ireland without taking part in an outrage."

"Do you mean to say that you were fired at?"

"It would seem so, for you are a stranger, St. John; the ruffian cannot bear *you* any ill-will."

"What will you do? Go to the nearest police barrack, and swear information at once? Ah, there is my train—*so* sorry I cannot go with you and see you through this unpleasant business, but my wife expects me—she is already very anxious—opposed my coming to Ireland; in short, the consequences to her would be disastrous if I did not turn up——"

Mr. Williamson, struggling for gravity, assured him that he could not be so selfish as to keep him from his wife; that her anxiety must

be considered; that he could go alone to the police barrack—not the first time, etc. etc. He controlled his countenance until he saw Mr. St. John seated in the railway carriage, still pale and agitated, and heard his entreaty that he would leave the savage country immediately and settle in England. Then, as the train steamed out of the station, the portly Rector was convulsed with laughter, and stood shaking with mirth on the platform, a thoroughly undignified figure. That was Mr. St. John's last glimpse of him, and it filled him with amazement.

It was literally his last glimpse, for when he had reached home, and was the hero of the hour, telling his friends of his desperate escape, a letter came from the Rector, who thought it prudent to make a clean breast of it, and prevent the story spreading further. Mr. St. John was devoid of a sense of humour; he took umbrage at the confession, and he never saw his old friend again.

Many a quaint anecdote was told the present writer by Mr. Williamson, some of them relating to his contemporaries and some to the Ulster peasant of a past generation. The story of Matt Callaghan, the "old farmer," occurs to us, among others. Fifty years ago that much-maligned body the Royal Irish Constabulary was not in existence. The law was not as strictly carried out then as it is now, and country magistrates were petty tyrants, or weakly lenient men, as the case might be. They swore in a few of the most respectable men in their neighbourhood as constables to help them to support law and order; but the law of the realm was lax enough in some parts. Mr. Williamson recollected Matt Callaghan, "the *old* farmer," so called because he divided his farm with his son of the same name. However, it came to pass, the elder Matt was given no title in all the parish but the "old farmer," while Matt, junior, was always called "the young farmer."

Mr. Ogilby, landlord of the place, was the only magistrate, an easy-going, indulgent man, who rarely stirred from home, and was on familiar terms with his neighbours, knowing the characteristics and peccadillos of everybody in his small world.

The old farmer was too fond of whiskey, and he was wont to be very troublesome in his cups—battering at doors, singing and shouting in the street of the village, and otherwise causing disturbance. Some households did not relish being roused late at night; some people laughed at the old man, and some were angry.

One night, when he was more drunk than usual, he made a great disturbance and was taken up. Mr. Ogilby fined him five shillings. He kept sober for a week after paying the fine—then he got drunk again, and went to the magistrate's door, upon which he tapped with his stick, saying:

> "If the law be justice, and the gospel true,
> There's five shillin' to the old farmer due."

"Do you hear me, your honour?"

Another rap with the stick.

"Ay," replied Mr. Ogilby, "I hear you—go away, or I'll have you taken up again for a brawler."

This scene was repeated day after day. The magistrate had no peace or quiet. Along the country roads, or in the village street, the old farmer used to meet him, calling out—

> "If the law be justice, and the gospel true,
> There's five shillin' to the old farmer due."

The persecution went on until Mr. Ogilby could endure it no longer. At length he opened his door, saying, "Here's five shillings, you old tormentor, and I'd give more than that to be rid of you."

"Thank your honour," replied the old farmer, taking off his hat, and making a grand bow. "I was going to tak' half-a-crown more off your honour, but as you have behaved so decent, I'll be content wi' my ain five shillin', an' I'll drink your health on my way home."

The old parish clerk, a species now almost as extinct as the Dodo, was often a great character; his position of responsibility and authority tending to foster whatever self-conceit might be in him. Thirty years ago the clerk led the singing and responding in all Irish country churches, the congregation giving themselves little trouble either to read or sing. Thus, in many cases, the voices of clergyman and clerk were the only voices to be heard. The clerk's favourite office was that of "rising the time," as he expressed it. The metrical version of the Psalms, according to Tate and Brady, was sung to slow airs, very much ornamented—"a linked sweetness long drawn out," and the clerk sometimes had the singing all to himself. A certain clerk in an Ulster parish, singing solo one Sunday, made a false start. By no means daunted, he stopped short and soliloquised, "I'll try it again," rector and congregation waiting anxiously. Another attempt—another pause. "I'll try it again," said he for the second time. He did try it again, and once more broke down. "Will I try it again? No," said he, "I'll quet it."

Another parish clerk was exceedingly vain of his rasping voice, and used to boast that he could go higher and lower than any instrument. His rector, not being a musician, did not venture to remonstrate with him much about his *singing*, but he was a poet also, and when Mr. Hammond discovered his gift in this line he felt obliged to interfere. The occasion was a Sunday that fell upon the fifth of November. The clerk, an ardent Orangeman from Fermanagh, stronghold of Protestantism in Ulster, announced the Psalm thus: "My friends, on this memorable anniversary I am going to give out a hymn of my own composure."

He cleared his throat after this preamble, and began in a stentorian tone,

"Confusion to the Papishes,
Who did conspire
To blow up the Parliament
With gunpowdire!"

Mr. Hammond was electrified. He descended from the reading-desk in hot haste to stop the further giving out of the "hymn."

Mr. Hammond was a very nervous man; the least thing was apt to put him out, and then he looked to Taylor to help him with the service. One Sunday evening an old Methodist came into church and began to groan loudly. This disturbed the Rector, and he whispered to the clerk to go and beg the man not to do so. Taylor marched off with alacrity, and those near heard him say, "His reverence bids me tell you to 'tak' your *amusement easy*,'" with a poke in the ribs that made the stranger start.

Mothers-in-law are supposed to be hard people to live with all the world over, but sometimes the fault may lie with the daughter-in-law, or, at least, be shared by her. A clergyman was once appealed to by a son and husband in the following terms:

"Your reverence, I ha' the poor life wi' them weemen; I wish you wad chastise (*i.e.*, rebuke) them for me."

Mr. Sinclair went to the house and spoke seriously to the combatants, apparently making most impression upon the mother, who promised to be friendly with her daughter-in-law. He found the former alone on his next visit, and said, "Well, I hope you and Margaret get on better now. Did you try to be forbearing with her, as I advised?"

"Ay, sir; I did my endeavour to tak' yer reverence's bidding."

"I am very glad to hear it. How did you begin?"

"I went to the door, an' I called 'Marget,' an' she just turned upon me, an' called me out o' my name."

"What did she call you?"

"She just turned round sharp when I called 'Marget!' an', says she, 'Ye ould reprobate!' says she."

To be called "out of one's name" is a great offence. The present writer recollects a pair of neighbours who lived in a perpetual state of warfare. "Are you and Jane better friends now?" was a natural question.

"No, miss, troth no! We are not!"

"Why, what harm does she do you?"

"She calls me out of my name, miss."

"What does she call you?"

"In troth, miss, this very morning she called me the divil an' *worse*."

LETITIA M'CLINTOCK.

THE DREAMS OF ONE'S OWN FRIENDS.

(*Concluded.*)

AFTER detailing in previous papers curious instances of varied types of historic or reported dreams, it may be interesting to give a few stories which we have heard told by those intimately concerned in them, in the writer's own circle. In every case the narrators are high-toned and even religious people, moving in respectable spheres of life, and whose veracity and good sense would certainly not be impugned in any other connection.

In our first story, we will call the person subjected to the dream, Mrs. X. She is a quiet, gentle, middle-aged lady, much beloved and esteemed in her circle, the very last person to court anything out of the way or sensational. Part of her life has been spent in Australia and part in England, and she has made many voyages between the two countries. It was just before undertaking one of these that she had the following strange experience.

She was about to say farewell to her husband, engaged in his professional duties, and return to her father's house. Her father was an elderly gentleman in robust health. He had been twice married and twice widowed. Mrs. X. was the child of his first wife.

So much by way of explanation.

My friend went to bed and to sleep as usual. But in her sleep she dreamed of herself, as lying on her bed, while past its foot walked her father, with his first wife on his right hand, and his second spouse on his left. There was nothing peculiar in their appearance, nothing tragic in the group, except the strange mingling of the dead and the living. All three looked as they had usually looked, in health and cheerful.

But when Mrs. X. awoke, the dream disturbed her with a vague fear of danger or distress overhanging her father. She could not put the vision from her mind, and presently she made a note of the date on which it occurred.

She went through her voyage, her latest news from home having been that all there were well and happy, and in eager expectation of her arrival. But as the great vessel moved slowly into dock, there, awaiting her, stood only her sister, clad in deepest mourning. Ere they were even clasped in each other's arms, the traveller had cried: "It is my father! And I know the time he died!"

She was right. The old gentleman had been going about in his accustomed health and spirits, and had dropped down dead, without one moment's warning, just before (allowing for the difference of time

in the antipodes) he had appeared to his daughter's slumbering consciousness.

Mrs. X. speaks of her dream only among her near relatives and friends. Her simple narrative never varies.

In contrast to this story of quiet British life, we will next relate a dream told to me by the younger brother of the gentleman to whom it occurred.

They belonged to a most remarkable family—not of this country. The mother was a Persian lady of family and fortune, who married a gentleman then high in favour at the Persian Court, though not of Persian birth. In fact, he did not know to what country he actually belonged, having been carried away captive in some petty warfare upon debated ground. His earliest recollection was of being shut in a room with another little boy and a lady, who was weeping, always weeping. Next, of being carried on a saddle, before a soldier, and travelling thus, day after day, for many days—the other little boy and the lady being seen no more.

In boyhood he knew himself as the adopted son of a Persian magnate. It was only in advanced life that his recognition of some words in a certain dialect made him feel that he must have been born in Georgia. He was brought up in the Mohammedan religion, as was the lady whom he married.

Presently, through some changes in the Persian Court, they found themselves belonging to a party grown obnoxious to those in power, and saw best to remove themselves to India. There, though considerably reduced in wealth, they maintained a high status, social and intellectual. The father died before the mother, and her son's regard for her and respect for her counsels and wishes might well have startled many who believe that all Moslem women are but dolls and victims.

The ladies of the family followed the strictest customs of their religion. Though they had been obliged to remove once or twice, they had never really seen the outside of their own house, always entering their closed conveyance in their courtyard, and seeing nothing beyond the interior of the vehicle till they alighted in another courtyard. In the Persian books they read, science had not advanced beyond regarding the earth as a plain, and stating that the sun moved round it. Yet the brothers, men of the most progressive ideas, did not seem to get out of real touch with these secluded and out-of-date ladies. One brother learned to play the violin, expressly that he might teach a sister, any other male teacher being, of course, contraband! Another bought a camera and worked himself up in photography, that the sons going from home might possess their portraits. Unable quite to conquer the Moslem aversion to pictures of the human being, the son who visited this country kept these photographs in his album, beneath photographs of landscapes, and only showed them, in a sudden half-guilty way, to his

most special friends. Dark-eyed, vivacious-looking ladies they were, and it seemed from their faces that no amount of seclusion or of antique science is sufficient to suppress a very vigorous female individuality, if it exists by nature.

The "dream" we have to relate occurred when the family had begun to scatter. The father was already dead. Three, at least, of the sons were away. My friend of after years, who was one of the younger sons, was a schoolboy in a capital city remote from his native village. Two elder brothers were also absent from their roof-tree, under which they had left their mother, now far advanced in years, in her usual health, and highly satisfied by the recent fulfilment of some of her most fondly cherished desires of family love and pride.

We will call these two elder sons Y and Z. Y was filling an official post, very far from his home, with a difficult and complicated journey between. Z was much nearer, could traverse the distance on horse-back except for crossing one river, at which there was a regular boat service.

One night, Y had a dream which, on waking, he found vividly impressed on his mind. He dreamed that he was in the family burying-place. There he saw his dead father exactly as in life, moving about, carefully scanning and measuring the ground. His mind interpreted this picturesque symbolism to mean that another member of the household was soon to be laid in the grave. Who so likely as the adored mother? With the passionate energy of his race, he instantly resolved to start homeward, and travelled day and night to reach there. He arrived just in time to receive his mother's last words and to close her eyes.

It seemed that she had sickened suddenly, a day or two before, the attack being of such a nature that a rapidly fatal termination was inevitable. The family resolved to send for Z, as he might reasonably hope to reach home in time. But they had resolved *not* to send for Y, since the message could scarcely be conveyed to him before all must be over, and they thought it best to leave him in peaceful ignorance in the meantime, since information could bear no result.

They had not reckoned on some strange, unseen force which had succeeded, *without any loss of time in transit*, in impressing Y's slumbers with the truth. For his dream had occurred on the very night that the old lady sickened.

It is remarkable that Z, sent for with hopeful promptitude, yet did not arrive till after the death—till after the funeral. And this through no fault of his own. The moment the news reached him his horse was saddled. But alas! when he came to the river's brink there was some utterly unforeseen and unprovided-for accident with the boat-service. And he had to wait on the shore chafing and lamenting for two whole days before he could get across.

The next story we shall tell is so full of detail and of sweet and

trange poetic suggestion that we trust it will charm our readers as t charmed ourselves when we heard it from the lips of the very dreamer himself.

He was an old family friend of ours. A man without guile, and with that sweet childlikeness of character which may be truly described as "of the Kingdom of Heaven." He had been always a poor man, working daily at an ill-paid Government post to maintain his little domestic circle, and living a daily round as innocent and cheerful as that of the best and purest of Charles Dickens's elderly men-characters.

We were talking once of some occurrences of an alleged supernatural character, and he was very ready to admit that there is much n earth and heaven which our philosophy had not yet explained. He had had one very strange experience himself, he said, and proceeded to recount it as follows :—

In his house, as a young married man, there had lived a youthful sister—Mary—of whom he spoke with much affectionate remembrance. This sister died in her early womanhood.

Our old friend's favourite companion, of his own sex, was a young naval officer of great promise. The vessel in which this young man served was presently selected to go to the East on some expedition of official scientific enquiry. Our old friend told us exactly what this expedition was—but this detail, not bearing exactly on the story, has unfortunately escaped my memory. The young man said goodbye to his acquaintances, promised duly to communicate with them, and went off in the full flush of youthful spirits and ambition.

Some time after his departure our old friend, retiring to rest as usual after one of his harmless and industrious days, had a dream so vivid and so interesting that when he awoke he immediately related it to his wife.

He dreamed that he walked on the shore of a large lake. It was but a dreary scene. The sluggish waters were rock-bound and the vegetation sparse and withered. The path where he trod was a rough and narrow one, winding about among the rocks. Walking ahead of him he saw the figure of Mary, the dead sister. And in his dream he seemed to remember that she was dead, but was not at all surprised at her appearance on the scene. Suddenly, rising as it were from the dull waters of the lake, he saw his dear friend, the young naval lieutenant. The latter came scrambling up over the boulders, not noticing his beloved comrade, intent only on overtaking Mary.

At the sound of his steps she turned. The two greeted each other with great joy, and, the young man linking her arm through his, they hastened along together, apparently still quite oblivious of the presence and observation of our old friend. He, on his part, as he simply expressed it, seemed in his sleep only to realise "the fun of the thing," and tried hard to overtake them to indulge in a little brotherly

badinage, and ask them when and how they had become such dea friends.

He was fast gaining upon them, when they rounded the corner o a great rock, and were lost to view. He scrambled on, confiden that in another moment he should catch them up. But when he too, rounded the corner, lo! there lay the onward path, level anc unbroken to the eye—but Mary and the naval lieutenant had both vanished! And as he stood looking around in astonishment, he awoke.

To his easy-going mind, the dream was only a pretty little story to which the form of the dead Mary lent a gentle pathos. But the narrative made a weird impression on his wife, and she insisted on his making a memorandum of the dream and its date in his pocket-book.

Time passed on, and the young lieutenant's promised letter never came. All this happened before the days of telegrams and cable-grams, when the friends of England's brave men were fain to wait long for tidings of them.

At last, one morning, our old friend resorted to his accustomed duties in the Government office, where the young naval lieutenant was no stranger—the very expedition on which he had gone being, indeed, part of its functions. As he entered, one of the senior officials looked up at him and said gravely:

"Mr. O., I regret that we have some very bad news for you."

On the very instant his dream, now many weeks old, flashed upon his mind!

"I know what the news is," he gasped. "Lieutenant G. is dead. He died on such a day of such a month."

"Yes," they answered, mystified, "that is the date when he was drowned in the Dead Sea. But how can you know this? News has reached us but this morning, and it is the first opportunity for its arriving in this country."

Mr. O. could only tell them the story of his dream, and show them the notes he had made in his pocket-book by his wife's wise advice.

All of these three stories, be it remarked, have one feature in common—to wit, the presence in the symbolism of the dream of those already known to be dead. Mrs. X. sees her father, whom she believed to be living and well, linked in close communion with his departed wives. It is the peculiar action of Y.'s dead father which conveys the sense of family bereavement to Y.'s mind. It is the dead "Mary" who is waiting to receive the young lieutenant from his watery grave.

What does this mean? Does it not seem to point to something beyond—yet not at variance with—the theory of mere thought-transference from the mind of one living person to that of another?

From our next story this element is wholly absent. The narrative

as been heard as related by the dreamer herself, an elderly lady esident in an Eastern colony of Ceylon.

She herself had never been in India; but she had a son a student n Calcutta.

One night she dreamed that she was standing beside a mighty iver which, in her sleep, she knew to be the Hooghly, the river on vhich Calcutta is situated. She saw a steamer approach, on whose leck she recognised her son. As she stood watching, another teamer drew near, and then—horror of horrors !—the two came in iolent collision, which resulted in the foundering of the first steamer, vhose passengers were presently struggling in the waters. She saw ier son, who was no swimmer, helplessly battle with the waves for a ioment and then sink. After a moment of intense agony she saw he youth reappear, dragged up as it were by the hair; and in her in- ense agitation she awoke.

Naturally, a mother did not soon forget such a dream, though robably she did not allow it to weigh too much on her mind, since uman nature has a wholesome tendency to dread the darkening hadow of "superstition." But the next Calcutta Mail, bringing etters dated a day or two after her dream, brought her a letter from friend, which said:

"We are glad to be able to tell you that Frank is now fairly ecovering from the terrible shock he received. For he was one of ie passengers on the steamer, when she met with a collision on ie —— inst. (the very date of the dream). Frank was thrown into ie water, and had so hard a struggle for life that he had actually one under, when some expert swimmer, seeing his position, caught im by the hair and rescued him—not a moment too soon."

This is one of the cases that seem readily explainable on the thought-transference" theory. We all know how vividly the tronger feelings of a man's life are said to rise upon him when rowning, and it seems by no means unnatural if the young man's ild thought of his absent mother should have flashed upon her iind an exact picture of his cruel danger and his opportune escue.

We now come to a recital which has a strange new factor in it, hich may well lead us on to the consideration of those curious npressions, revelations or foreseeings of an unknown past, or the nknown Future, which show us that the awful gift of "seership" is o mere detail of the mythology of bygone ages.

The dreamer, from whose own lips the story is taken, was in this ase a lady, most happily married, but whose early days of connubial fe had been shadowed by intense anxiety for her husband's health, nattered by a sudden and dangerous accident. All such anxiety ad duly passed away, leaving nothing but a trace of nervous sensi- ility in her, which, however, she controlled so effectually that its xistence was not suspected by any of her acquaintances, among

whom she passed as a rather unusually matter-of-fact person, with an abhorrence of sentiment or effusion of any kind; a character which she has maintained ever since.

At the date of our narrative, the pair were in particularly fortunate circumstances. For some time everything around them had taken a rosy hue. He was stronger than he had ever been before in his life, and was rising rapidly in his profession. She, too, was making her modest mark in an art which it was her joy to cultivate. The couple resolved to indulge themselves in a summer holiday, longer and more costly than was their wont.

They had laid certain plans of their own for this ramble, had looked up time-tables, settled routes and so forth, when their arrangements were scattered by an unexpected and very tempting invitation to join some of the young wife's kinsfolk, who were sojourning in a remote mountain district in the far North.

This they resolved to accept, though it came almost at the last moment before their departure, and made it somewhat desirable that they should change their projected railway run to a sea voyage. The lady raised not the slightest objection to this—though she was a bad sailor—for the port of their destination lay in a country with which she had many ancestral associations, and a visit to which had been one of the dreams of her girlhood, though all personal ties between it and her had been severed almost before her birth—certainly for about a quarter of a century.

She had her reward so far, that on this occasion she enjoyed herself more than on any previous or subsequent voyage. She was not ill at all, was able to enter into the incidents of the journey, and to admire such coast scenery as came within ken. Nevertheless she was not quite at ease, cared only for the most meagre diet, which, to spare her encounter with the cabin smells, her husband brought her on deck. And she was often glad to "assume the recumbent position"—where, nestling down among comfortable pillows and rugs, it was only natural for her to fall asleep.

And as she slept, she dreamed. And she dreamed she was taking this very journey, voyaging to the same haven. But oh! under what awfully different circumstances.

For she saw herself no longer a tenderly-cared-for wife, but a desolate widow, travelling, as it seemed, without certain aim, or any other society or protection but that of a very young man, little more than a boy, whose face was utterly unfamiliar to her.

In her sleep, she felt the sinking of the widow's heart, the crushing sense of loneliness, the helpless despair with which she realised that despite her companion's presence and kindly attentions, she stood absolutely alone in her sorrow—in that bitterness of grief with which a stranger intermeddleth not. It seemed more than she could bear!

Suddenly, in the depth of her anguish, a grateful fragrance rose before her, a kind voice called her name. They came upon her

dream as if they, and not it—were illusory—and she started up, opening scared eyes, to find her husband smiling over her and offering her a cup of tea!

"Oh, I dreamed that you were dead! I dreamed that you were dead!" she cried, in the rapture of her delight scarcely able to keep from throwing her arms about his neck, all heedless of critical fellow-passengers sauntering to and fro. And then she sat up and told him all about it as she took her tea, and he shook his head and said that it was well they were to take holiday, for it was clear her nerves were rather unstrung. But he asked her one question—only one—and she always remembered it and her reply.

"Was the youth who seemed to be with you my younger brother?"

"No," she answered. "No. He was nobody she had ever seen. She did not think she should know the face, but she was absolutely positive he was not her brother-in-law."

She tried to put the dream out of her mind, the mental pain she had felt during its course making it horrible to remember, and seeming to seize upon her again at every recollection. But a very pleasant holiday, with constant change of scene and society, coupled with the ever-increasing vigour of her husband, served gradually to banish memory of the miserable vision.

On their return journey, at a friend's house, they made acquaintance with a young lad, in whose studies they interested themselves, and who, by a mutual attraction and the pressure of external circumstances, was afterwards drawn very much into their lives, until, in the course of time, he became a member of their household.

A few years passed on. Fortune had its ups and downs—the wife had a severe illness. Their residence was changed once or twice. At last the beloved husband died. The old home had to be broken up. Providence, speaking to the widow in her duty to the young people now left to her sole charge—especially to that youth whom we have mentioned, and who was now on the threshold of active life—distinctly directed that she should take up her abode, at least for a while, in the city to which she had voyaged, a happy wife, on that sunny summer holiday. Yet in many respects the details of her future life remained strangely vague and uncertain.

Oddly enough, it was only after she had arrived at her destination—travelling this time by train and not by sea — that the dream returned to her memory. She was taking an evening walk with her young family and mournfully speaking of the past to the only one who could in the least understand the magnitude of her loss—that very youth who had found a friendly shelter under her husband's roof and now still remained with her. It was then that the strange dream, so strangely forgotten, so strangely fulfilled, strangely flashed back on her remembrance!

There are many curious points about this dream, and many

questions one would like to ask. Would this lady have had this dream at all had she and her husband persisted in their original plan for the holiday? Or did she catch this baleful breath from the Future, by getting as it were *on the track* of the coming events? Be it noted, also, that in the strictest sense, this dream was symbolic, for the mere journey as a widow was not made by sea; nor was the journey itself actually taken in the company of the young friend whose subsequent filial faithfulness left no doubt of his being the guardian companion it had shadowed forth.

The dreamer always declares that no one but herself and her husband could ever fully realise how impossible it seemed, at the date of her dream, that any future life of hers, as wife or widow, could ever be settled in the place they were then about to visit. Every circumstance existing at the time pointed in an opposite direction. It is evident, too, that she did not in their new acquaintance recognise the figure of her dream. If she had she would have shrunk from him in terror! Her utter forgetfulness of the dream also proves that she did not consciously "work it out." In what can such a dream as this originate? Thought transference? Then from what mind? It could be only from some disembodied mind that could itself see into the future! And this is not a theory to be lightly entertained.

Again, it makes us wonder, shrinkingly, how much there may be in the old stern theories of Fate—of a line laid down for our lives, which they cannot evade or transgress, though there may still remain to us some freedom of behaving well or ill, wisely or foolishly, at each particular juncture. Perhaps it is not so horrible an idea after all. Only it is difficult to understand how the circumstances of our lives can be irrevocably fixed beforehand, without our actions and characters being also determined. And that is a doctrine to which the healthy human consciousness gives flat denial. Perhaps a careful study of well-authenticated instances of fulfilled "presentiment," or "foresight," alongside with other instances of "insight," or right reading of the unknown past, might bring us a little nearer to the daylight which must somewhere brighten on this dark avenue of perplexed philosophy.

"WE FELL OUT, MY WIFE AND I."

WE spent our honeymoon at St. Bridgets-super-Mare, and as a natural consequence we quarrelled.

Now that I have the opportunity, I should like, once for all, to raise my protest against the modern fashion which sends a newly-married pair off to spend their honeymoon in some secluded country spot, just because some wealthy relation has, as the newspapers say, "kindly lent his mansion for the occasion." If the refinements of modern civilisation do not permit you to carry your bride straight to your own tent, in the name of common-sense and prudence take her to London or Paris, or some place where a variety of scenes and outside interests will prevent her from finding out too quickly that her beloved Edwin has his faults like the rest of mankind.

If the following short account of the result of a quiet honeymoon should cause even one rash couple to pause before they commit themselves to the same fatal course that we pursued, I shall feel that I have not written in vain.

My marriage with Celia Dobson was not looked upon with much favour by the greater part of my relations. We Blundells are, most of us, proud of our family and ancestors. We claim to be the direct descendants of the Blondel who serenaded Cœur de Lion outside his prison window. With the exception of this incident, I never could find out that my ancestors had ever distinguished themselves in any way; but my Aunt Matilda, who had acted as guardian to me since my father's death, never lost an opportunity of impressing upon me that we Blundells were second to none in point of blood and descent. I can see now the air of conscious pride and self-satisfaction with which she always spoke of "the Family" (always with a capital F), or settled any vexed question of etiquette by quoting whatever had been from time immemorial the custom of the Blundells with regard to the subject under discussion.

It was therefore a shock of no ordinary kind when I announced my intention of marrying Celia Dobson.

The Dobsons were in trade. That was enough—more than enough for Aunt Matilda. She wept, she entreated, she implored me not to sully the glory of the Blundell escutcheon by allying myself with one who probably could not enumerate her ancestors for further back than a paltry century.

But her expostulations were all in vain. I was my own master. I was head over ears in love with Celia, and I considered that I was, on the whole, the best judge of what would be likely to add to my happiness; and having informed Aunt Matilda that I intended to please myself on this occasion, and further added that it was an

honour to the Blundells to have such an angel as my Celia introduced among them, I left her to mourn over my degeneracy and wilfulness and to prophesy that no good would come of it.

Our wedding took place in May—a proverbially unlucky month—but we both of us scorned such superstition. Our original intention had been to spend a fortnight of our honeymoon in Paris and the remaining fortnight in London; but some short time before our wedding-day Matthew Dobson, Celia's great-uncle and godfather, must needs take it into his head to offer us the loan of his villa at St. Bridgets-super-Mare. I was at first for refusing it with thanks, but Celia's mother, whether from the fact that she had expectations from Uncle Matthew and was afraid of offending him, or from an idea that it was the fashionable thing to do, pressed Celia to accept; and I—I was far too happy to care very much where I went, so long as Celia went with me.

So to St. Bridgets we went. I must say the weather was most unkind to us. The two first days of our stay at Montenotte (as Mr. Dobson had called his villa) were days of continual rain, utterly precluding any idea of leaving the house; and when the third day came and there was still no sign of a clear, I began to regret that I had given up our Paris plan so easily.

The house was comfortable enough, but to me, who have always been to a mild extent a follower of the æsthetic school, the style of furniture was depressingly ugly. The royal blue repp curtains of the drawing-room, and the corner brackets covered with emerald green velvet, and trimmed with macramé lace, set my teeth on edge. The walls were spattered with plates, most of them of absolutely worthless china, and Mr. Dobson's artistic proclivities were further evidenced by a badly-modelled alabaster Cupid and Psyche under a glass shade in the middle of a large mahogany table, and an undoubted (!) Carlo Dolci Holy Family which hung over the fireplace, carefully shrouded from view by a red moreen curtain. As I look back to that room in my mind's eye, I consider that I had some excuse for feeling out of temper!

I do not think I should have been so much aggravated by my surroundings, if I could have, so to speak, "let off steam," by expressing my horror of them to Celia. But she appeared quite satisfied, even delighted with everything; and I ask any married man if there is anything more trying to moral fibre than to see the wife of your bosom calmly, placidly good-tempered, when you yourself are seething with suppressed ill-humour?

I made one attempt to improve matters by suggesting that it might be a good plan if we were to put away in some box the white crochet antimacassars with which the drawing-room was plentifully adorned until we were going away. But Celia looked puzzled.

"What a funny idea, Dick!" she said. "Why should you want to do that?"

"They will get so dirty, you know," I prevaricated feebly.

"But, you stupid boy, they will wash beautifully! Uncle Matt would never have left them here if he did not wish us to use them."

I saw she was hopelessly contented, and walked away to the window with my irritation driven inwards, and therefore, like a rash under the same circumstances, much more dangerous.

Whatever poets may say, May is not a pleasant month, especially by the sea-side. As I looked out now, I saw before me a dull grey world. Heavy grey clouds overhead, a heaving, grey expanse of sea below. The tide was out, and to right and left stretched away as far as I could see a long reach of sandy shore—pleasant enough, doubtless, in summer-time, but now looking drearily uninteresting, as the waves broke on it with a monotonous, melancholy swish.

A cold north-easterly wind was driving the rain against the windows, and the trees bowed and swayed and flung up their arms, as though mourning for the early fate of their beautiful young leaves, which the wind was recklessly tearing from the parent stem and strewing on the ground.

"No going out for us again to-day as far as I can see," I said gloomily.

Celia sighed sympathetically.

"It is too bad, isn't it?" she said. "And I had set my heart on a ride with you, Dick! Wasn't it kind of Uncle Matt to send down his two horses for us? I do love riding; don't you, Dick?"

She walked over to the window and passed her hand caressingly through my arm; but I was longing for a plausible grievance, and the fact of not being able to find one made me twice as irritable as before.

As she seemed to expect an answer, I said, with that particular "dumpy" sound in my voice which is so discouraging to an interlocutor:

"Oh, I like riding well enough when I have good horses."

"Well, I am sure Uncle Matt's ——" she began, but I cut her short.

"Your Uncle Matt's horses are a couple of old screws. I went to look at them in the stable yesterday."

She looked vaguely bewildered at the tone of my voice.

"Why, what is the matter with you, Dick? Has anything annoyed you?"

Here was my opportunity.

"Anything annoyed me!" I burst out. "Isn't it enough to annoy any fellow, to be cooped up in a confounded hole like this, with nothing but that beastly sea and sand to look at outside, and a room like this to live in?"

Celia looked hurt and indignant, and I saw the glimmer of coming tears in her eyes.

"What is the matter with the room?" she asked. "I am sure I

see nothing to grumble at. I do not think I ever was in a nicer room than it is!"

"Very likely! But, my dear Celia," I continued, with a patronising tone, which must have been infinitely harder to bear than even my simple bad temper—"My dear Celia, I am afraid you have still a great deal to learn in the matter of artistic taste." And I looked round the room with an expression of lofty contempt.

"Oh, as far as artistic taste goes, Dick, I am sure you are wrong, for Uncle Matt is ever so artistic. Why, he draws and paints himself!"

"I have no doubt he is a second Raphael," I sneered, "but he does not know how to choose his carpets and curtains! Look at that!" and I shook the folds of blue repp savagely; "and that!" and I kicked viciously at one of the blue roses which, with a yellow flower as yet unknown to botanists, meandered over the carpet in profusion. "Do you mean to say you do not see the awful vulgarity of it? But," returning once more to the enragingly patronising tone, "you are a Blundell now, my dear Celia, and you must just try to forget everything you ever learnt as a Dobson as fast as ever you can."

Celia fired up with an unexpectedness which took me aback.

"If you are going to say nasty things about my family, Dick, I shall certainly not stay to listen to you. If you think so little of the Dobsons I wonder you married one of them! And as to forgetting all I ever learnt as a Dobson ——" By this time the angry tears were running down her cheeks—— "There is one thing I was taught, which I should be very sorry to forget, though it seems to have been left out of your education, and that is gratitude."

My heart and my conscience both smote me at these words. I said nothing, and she turned from the window and resumed her work with feverish energy. I could see by the agitated way in which the needle was stuck into the material and then snapped out again that her feelings were very considerably ruffled.

I made one or two attempts at starting a new topic of conversation, but was met with chilling monosyllables. At last I said:

"Celia, dear, I am sorry if I offended you just now. I should not have been so cross if my digestion had not been upset by being shut up for nearly three days without exercise, and eating too much wedding-cake!"

I tried to finish my sentence with a semi-jocose expression. But I got no answering smile from Celia.

"It would be much better to saddle the right horse, Dick," she said sternly, "and say that your temper got the better of you. We Dobsons may be a very inferior, vulgar race, but thank goodness we have not got the Blundell temper!"

"Oh, very well!" I said, shortly. "I see you wish to quarrel—so I shall leave you to yourself to recover *your* temper, Dobson or

Blundell, whichever it may be!" And I walked out of the room slamming the door after me, and feeling half sorry and half glad that Celia had scorned the olive branch of reconciliation I had held out to her.

I now had a fairly plausible grievance—at least I thought I had—and I thrust my arms into my macintosh and took my umbrella out of the stand, with a grim satisfaction in the thought that by going out in weather like this—driven out into it by my wife's obstinate refusal to make friends—I should probably catch a bad cold. All the dramatic possibilities of this imaginary cold flittered before my mind's eye in pleasing succession—chills to the liver—pleurisy—rheumatic fever. "Perhaps she will be sorry then!" I muttered to myself as I shut the hall-door behind me, and walked ostentatiously under the drawing-room windows, whistling as I went, and striving to impart to my features a perfectly unconcerned, amiable expression. I thought I heard a tap at the window, and my name called, but I would not look up, and strode on with as much dignity as I could command.

Once out of view of the windows, I paused to consider in which direction I should go to look for the pleurisy and rheumatism which were to bring my erring wife to a sense of her misdoings.

I might either go down to the sands, which as far as I could see outlined the coast under the dark overhanging cliffs, or I might follow the main road which passed through the straggling village on into the country beyond. We had come by it the night of our arrival at St. Bridgets, and I had a vague remembrance of somewhat monotonous undulating downs. But just at this moment the relative merits of inland and coast scenery interested me comparatively little. "I'll toss up," I said to myself. "Heads the road—tails the sands."

Heads it was, so off I set along the road. I passed through the village and walked on for some distance, mentally anathematising Matthew Dobson for having decoyed me into such a dead-alive kind of place. Nothing could be more depressingly commonplace than this well-kept road, with its close-cropped downs on each side, and its telegraph poles recurring at regular intervals. But any great wealth of scenery would have been thrown away upon me just then, for all my faculties were employed in a hand-to-hand encounter with the elements.

The wind seemed to take a malicious pleasure in trying to tangle me up in my macintosh by driving the flapping tails in between my legs, and by getting under the cape and whirling it over my head and about my ears in a most bewildering fashion. Then, no sooner had I reduced the cape to comparative submission than a stronger gust than before lifted my hat off my head and sent it spinning along the road in front of me.

I know no time when a man looks more thoroughly ridiculous

than when he is in pursuit of a runaway hat. With what fiendish delight it waits until you have actually stooped to pick it up, and then how aggravatingly it bounds and skims on for a few more paces, only to repeat the same process; until some kindly eddy carries it into a corner from which it cannot escape!

No less than three times did the wind play me this nasty trick, and at last in desperation I drew out my silk handkerchief and tied it securely over the refractory head-gear and under my chin, painfully conscious of what my appearance must be, and devoutly thankful that by no possibility could Celia see me from the villa windows With such a get-up dignity was incompatible, and I had come to the conclusion that a mixture of dignity and injured innocence was the most fitting attitude for me to adopt towards her.

I was now able to look about me with tolerable comfort. I was going up a slight incline in the road. On each side of me were the unvarying, undulating downs, but certainly the road was considerably narrower than that upon which I had set out to walk on leaving the village, and the telegraph poles, which I had then noticed, were now conspicuous by their absence. I was puzzled to account for this at first, but then remembering the chases after my hat, I came to the conclusion that in the excitement of one of them I must have strayed off the main road on to a side one.

I was all the better pleased. I was sure to meet someone, or to pass some cottage where I could ask my way home, and, in the meantime, the uncertainty as to my whereabouts gave just that element of interest to my walk that had been wanting before.

Altogether, I felt in better spirits. I had walked off my bad temper to a great extent, and began to think that perhaps, after all, I had been a trifle unreasonable and rude to Celia. A feeling of remorse at having left her all alone in the stupid little villa took possession of me, and I would have turned straight back by the way I had come to seek for reconciliation, if a sudden bend of the road had not brought me unexpectedly in view of the sea.

I must have been walking in something of a ring, and I also must have been gradually ascending since I left the village, for now I found myself on the top of one of the cliffs overlooking the sands. The road here took a sudden dip, and apparently led down to the shore by a series of rather steep zig-zags.

It would now, it seemed to me, be much shorter to make my way home by the shore. At any rate there was a cottage a little way down the hill, and I could find out there which was my best way to get back to St. Bridgets.

I was pleased to see, as I looked round, that on all sides there were the signs of a clear-up on the part of the weather. The wind seemed to have gone round to some more favourable point, for though still blowing hard, it did not now bring with it the driving showers of rain. The clouds out to windward were lifting, and there was

ven every now and then a watery gleam of sunshine. The fresh alt smell of the sea-weed, which was wafted up to me where I was tanding, was invigorating, and the occasional scream of a sea-gull as dipped up and down on an incoming wave, had a peculiar charm f its own which I could not help being conscious of.

I hurried down to the little cottage. The door was ajar. I nocked but got no answer. So I pushed it open, and saw, seated efore the fire, an old woman, who apparently did not hear my ntrance, for she went on with her knitting without even turning her ead.

"Good evening, ma'am," I said.

Still no sign that she heard me. I walked over to her and gently ouched her arm. She started round then, and her ball of worsted mped off her lap and rolled on the floor. I picked it up for her.

"Can you tell me which is the nearest way to St. Bridgets?" I ked.

"Eh?" she answered, putting her hand to her ear.

"Which is the shortest way to St. Bridgets?" I reiterated louder.

"Aye! thee must speak louder if thee wants me to hear. I'm an d 'ooman—ninety-one come Michaelmas, and I'm deaf these twenty ars and more. Nay! nay!" as I made another equally fruitless tempt to make myself heard: "if there's aught thee wants to know, ee'd best go down to the shore. Bill, he's there, and a fine lad he , though I says it as shouldn't, being his mother. I'm an old oman, I am—ninety-one come Michaelmas, and ——"

I did not wait for further reminiscences. I saw it was hopeless to cit further information from her, and set off down to the shore, sting to find "Bill" and to get more lucid directions from him as my best way home.

I had not walked far along the sand when I came upon "the fine ," a grey-haired man of about fifty, who was at work repairing a at that was hauled up on the shore.

"Whereabouts is St. Bridgets, and can you kindly tell me the st way to get to it?" I asked him.

He stopped in his work, and looked up at me from under the m of his "Sou'wester."

"Aye, aye, sir! I can tell you right enough. St. Bridgets lies t round that point of land as you sees before you there."

"Thank you," I said. "Then of course it will be much quicker me to walk along the sands than to go back by the road by which ame—down past your cottage?"

"Not a bit of it, sir! You will just have to go back the way you ne."

"But, my good man, that point of land can't be much more than hundred yards off, and if St. Bridgets is only a little the other e of it, it must take me a shorter time to go this way than to rn all that long way by the road!"

"For all that, sir, it is by the road you must go. I see you're a stranger here, sir, or you wouldn't talk so calm of walking to St Bridgets over the Witches' Sands, the awfullest quicksands along th coast. The Lord help you, for no one else could, if you got int those sands!"

"Quicksands!" I said with a gasp, as I thought that only for m chance meeting with this man I should, in all probability, hav walked on unconsciously to an awful doom. "Do they lie betwee us and the point?"

"Yes, sir."

I looked along the level sands. The rain had quite stopped The sun was low down on the horizon, and the wet sand was gleam ing in the setting rays. Here and there the retreating tide had le pools of water behind it, and in these I could see the reflection of th pale yellow band of light, in the middle of which the sun was sinking t rest. To my eyes it all seemed one long even stretch—with nothin to tell of the treacherous sands which were waiting to swallow up th unwary traveller.

"Ah! sir! you might look a long while afore you'd see th Witches' Sands," said Bill, interpreting my puzzled expressio "There's but the one mark you can steer by—Heaven's danger signal I calls them. Do you see, sir, a white mark there down the face c the rock, about one hundred yards this side of the point, and anothe mark the same about one hundred and fifty yards along from wher you are standing now? Well! you're safe enough so long as yo don't get inside either of them. They're some sort of whit moss stuff as grows down the cliff, and only for them there's many one would have lost his life. There's some of them foolhardy cha as don't seem happy unless they're putting their precious lives i danger, wi'-out givin' a thought to the mother or wife that's mayb dependin' upon them, as has climbed the whole way along the fac of the cliff, round to St. Bridgets. But you see, sir, the cliff hang over a good bit, and 'tis nasty shaley stuff as gives no grip for hand and feet, and if it gives way under you—down you go, straight on t the quicksands, and then nothing but a miracle could save you."

"Well," I said, "it is most fortunate I met you here, for I shoul most certainly have tried to find my way home across the sands. is a great shame the authorities do not put up a notice-board to wa people of their danger."

"Aye, sir! there was a warning-board up all through the summe but the first storm in the winter carried it away; and you see, sir, it only once in a way as visitors comes here afore June or July; so suppose as how they thought it wasn't worth while to put it up soon like. And so——"

He stopped short and shaded his eyes from the dazzle of th setting sun.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated. "What is that? Can you se

sir? My sight is not so good as it was.—Is that anybody riding round the point?"

A sudden, sickening presentiment came over me. My heart gave a bound, and then seemed to stand still. I shaded my eyes, too, and gazed out to the point.

One look was enough. I sprang forward with a scream. "Stop! Stop!" I shouted.

For in that one glance I had recognised beyond doubt the outline of Uncle Matt's ewe-necked mare, silhouetted with painful distinctness against the pale yellow of the sky; and riding her—slowly in our direction—a lady who could be no other than Celia.

The concentrated agony of years seemed to be all crowded into that moment of time. "Man!" I cried, clutching Bill by the shoulder: "that is my wife! My wife, I tell you!" Then, letting him go, I waved my arms wildly. "Go back! go back!" I called.

The wind blew the words down my throat. And still I could see Celia slowly but surely approaching the white mark—"Heaven's danger signal!"

With no distinct idea of what I meant to do, I was beginning to run towards the advancing rider, still waving my arms as though to push her back from her awful fate. Bill caught me by the sleeve.

"What are you doin,' sir? You won't save her that way. If she sees you at all she'll more likely think you are beckoning her on than telling her to go back. There's only one thing you can do, sir. Run for your life till you get within a couple of yards of the white mark nearest us—then take to the rocks, the way I was telling you just now; and mayhap—mayhap you'll get across in time."

I heard no more. I had torn off my coat and hat and was flying along towards the white mark at racing speed.

It did not take me long to reach the spot where I must leave the sands for the rocks. Before beginning my perilous climb, I cast one hasty glance in Celia's direction. Was I already too late? No! thank God! An hysterical sob of joy rose in my throat as I saw that some whim of the moment had induced her to stop in her onward way, in order to try to oblige her horse to walk into the sea. I had just time to see that the horse was restive and kept backing away from the advancing waves into which she was evidently bent on urging it, and then my whole energies of mind and body had to be concentrated on the difficulty of making my way along the shaley face of the cliff.

Rising straight up from the sand for about twenty feet was a sheer, smooth slab of rock, which afforded absolutely no foothold, but above this came the strata of shale along which I was scrambling as best I could. The overhanging cliff above me looked as though it were longing to fall over and push me down—down on to the horrible, hungry sands below. The shale cut my hands, and broke away from under my feet at each step, and all the time there was the

haunting fear that I should be too late; that before I should have got to the second white mark, the sands would have swallowed up my darling for ever. I remembered our quarrel with a sort of dull, distant pain. Oh! if only I could be in time! How could I endure to go through life never knowing whether she had forgiven my hasty words, or whether she had gone to her awful death still smarting under their injustice.

I could only have been about ten minutes, but it seemed to me to be hours, before I at last reached the mossy white mark, which showed me I had come to the edge of the quicksand. It was only as I crossed it and scrambled down to the shore below, that I dared to look to see if my worst fears had been realised.

How can I describe the revulsion of feeling when, as my feet touched the sand, I heard Celia's laugh, and looking up saw her on the ewe-necked mare within a yard of me.

"Why, you silly boy!" she exclaimed; "what ever made you come that way? I have been waiting here for the last three minutes, expecting every second to see you come tumbling down! You ought to take better care of yourself now you are a steady married man!"

I could say nothing. I staggered like a drunken man. For three minutes she had been standing there within a few yards of certain destruction! It made me dizzy and faint to think of the narrowness of her escape.

At last I managed to say hoarsely, as I took her horse's head and turned it homewards: "How did you come here?"

"Why! can't you see?" she said, puzzled at my manner and my white, scared face. "When you left me in that very ungallant way this morning, I had to find some amusement for myself, so I had the mare saddled and came out for a little ride on the sands."

"Oh! my darling! my darling! can you ever forgive me?" I cried, brokenly. And then, by degrees, I told her of the horrible danger that had threatened her, of my agony, and of my almost despairing climb along the cliff.

Her face paled. "My poor Dick!" she said, as she laid her hand on my shoulder. "And to think how cross I was to you!"

"Cross!" I exclaimed. "No wonder, when I——" But she stopped me gently.

"Don't let us talk of it any more, Dick. And yet, after all," she said, as she wiped away a few tears, "it was a really providential quarrel, for if we hadn't quarrelled, we should have gone out riding together, and we should both of us have got into the quicksands!"

"Well," I returned, "the next quarrel might not be so providential. A quarrel is always a dangerous experiment. We won't repeat it; will we, dear?"

And, in spite of the "Blundell temper," we never have.

THE ARGOSY.

MAY, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARK BROWN PLAYS THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

FEW parts were more alien to Mark Brown's character than that of the Good Samaritan; yet circumstances ruled that he should lay it on the night of Reuben's temptation and meeting with Vera.

The circumstances which kept him awake that night were of a very ivial nature; mussels for supper, and some domestic changes his aster's marriage was to cause in the establishment. These changes nd the mussels had been discussed at supper in the kitchen, and lark retired to rest full of both, and equally unable to digest either. he changes affected his peace of mind, the mussels his body; both nited to keep him awake; so Mark lay tossing about, blaming alter-ately the mussels and the new arrangements, the fishmonger and the ector.

Three new servants were to enter the household with the bride: a utler, a coachman and a lady's maid. To the latter Mark had no bjection; to the two former he objected strongly, for he was to be nder both, and would no longer have it all his own way with the aid-servants. Instead of being king of the kitchen, he had sunk to a ere under-servant, with a master in the stable and another in the antry in addition to Mr. Ryot Tempest. As he lay considering ese things, with the mussels heavy on his chest, he heard Vera's edroom door open, for his room was an attic over hers. A minute ter and he heard the hall door open and shut, and, jumping out of ed he went to the window. By the bright moonlight he saw in the rden the figure of his young mistress wrapped in her blue dressing-own, her beautiful hair streaming down her back, the crisp, wavy, lken tresses veiling the graceful girlish form in a priceless cloth of old as it flitted down the drive.

Surprise, curiosity, suspicion, and a malignant pleasure were the arious emotions this apparition caused in Mark's mind as he rubbed

his eyes to make sure he was not dreaming, though the mussels were doing their utmost to convince him he was very much awake. Quick as possible he jumped into his nether garments and a coat, and, shoes in hand, stole quickly and noiselessly down the front staircase, and opening the hall door, let himself out much more quietly than Vera had done.

The night was so bright that although Vera had the start of Mark by a few minutes, the first turn in the drive brought her within his sight. She was walking deliberately, and on the gravel path. Mark took to the grass lest his footsteps should betray him, and kept in shadow as much as possible, and as far off Vera as he could without losing sight of her.

His object in thus keeping in the background was two-fold: he did not want his young mistress to know he was dogging her steps, and he was in mortal terror lest Captain Raleigh, whom he at once decided must be near at hand, should dart out from behind some tree and make short work of him.

The fantastic shadows of the trees cast by the moon made him nervous, and Vera's figure, so weirdly beautiful in the pale moonlight as it glided mysteriously on before, did not tend to reassure him.

It was perhaps not surprising that it never occurred to Mark that Vera was walking in her sleep. He had had no experience of somnambulism, so her movements did not strike him as peculiar; and it was characteristic of a mean nature like his that he should at once attribute her action, certainly a strange one, to a bad motive; particularly as he had conceived a great dislike for his master's daughter, and was only too glad to get hold of anything he could turn against her. As he followed Vera down the drive he felt morally certain he was about to witness a stolen meeting between her and her lover. Probably the meeting was to arrange her elopement, and if he could get near enough he might overhear their arrangements, and, by warning Mr. Ryot Tempest, frustrate their design, and render himself indispensable to his master.

Half-an-hour before he had been cursing the mussels for keeping him awake; now he was ready to bless them and reward the fishmonger for affording him so golden an opportunity of distinguishing himself.

When Vera left the grounds, letting the gate swing back after her, Mark, emboldened by the familiar sound, instead of following her out on to the open sward which lay between the Rectory garden and the canal, in the full light of the moon, stole into the shrubbery, and under cover of the branches, watched her movements and looked furtively about for Captain Raleigh.

To his astonishment, instead of Captain Raleigh, who should he see close to the water's edge but Reuben Foreman with a bundle in his arms. The click of the gate caused him to look round; and then

to Mark's further amazement, he saw Reuben take off his coat, wrap it round the bundle, which, as we know, he hid in the old tree, and then rush forward just in time to stop Vera from walking into the mill-pool. Mark, although near enough to see all this, was too far off to hear a word that was spoken, and the conclusion he jumped at was that Vera was attempting to commit suicide when the blacksmith stopped her. But what in the name of all that was wonderful was Reuben Foreman, whom Mark knew to be ill in bed, doing in the middle of the night down by the canal?

What business had he there? What did the bundle he had disposed of so carefully contain? Did Vera know?

Apparently not; but Mark intended to find out as soon as he could venture from his hiding-place. Presently Vera and Reuben began to walk slowly towards the Rectory gate, and as they passed the place where Mark was hidden, he could hear they were engaged in earnest conversation, but only a word here and there reached his ears.

Should he follow them, and try to overhear their conversation, which would perhaps throw some light on their mysterious conduct? Or should he gratify his curiosity, and see what that bundle in the tree contained?

After a few moments' hesitation he decided to do both: to run and look inside the tree first, and then follow this odd couple, and try to make out what they were discussing so earnestly. So, squeezing himself through the fence which enclosed the shrubbery, he ran to the tree, and, stooping down, he put in his hand, and found the bundle was warm, and moved when he touched it. Once again Mark rubbed his eyes, and once again those blessed mussels assured him he was not dreaming; and then, half fearing the bundle might bite, he pulled it gingerly out of the tree, and, opening the shawl which wrapped it, he saw a sleeping infant.

"I'll be shot if I am awake," said Mark, scratching his red head.

But he was awake, and he wasn't shot; more's the pity, perhaps.

"A baby, as I am alive! I'd as soon have expected to find a lion or a tiger! A brat a month old, and Reuben Foreman leaves it in the trunk of a tree with his coat for its bed in the middle of the night. Blessed if I can make head or tail of this; it beats me hollow."

And he looked again at the sleeping baby. Was Reuben the father? Was the religious Reuben, the pious blacksmith, no better than the rest of the world? Had Mark caught his spiritual guide tripping? Mark was ready enough to believe Reuben a hypocrite; to the impure nothing is pure; all that the sweep touches is black.

Suddenly the shawl in which the child was wrapped caught his eye; he knew it to be Janet's, and in an instant he guessed that the child also was hers. Her long absence was accounted for at last. What Reuben was doing with it he now neither knew nor cared; he had but one idea: to find Janet, to tell her he knew her secret, and force her to marry him at once. As for the child, he did not care a straw

what became of that, and he bundled it back so roughly that the little creature woke and began to cry.

Mark had no time to listen to the wailing infant; neither had he any further interest, for the present, in Vera and Reuben. His one thought was Janet, and he set off at once to the blacksmith's cottage to find her.

He did not go by the lane, but took a short cut through the Rectory grounds, which brought him out half-way up the hill, on the top of which was Reuben's cottage. There was no light to be seen when he got there. The door was locked, and the cottage, to all appearance, was empty. Not a sound was to be heard inside, and no response was made to his knocks. He walked round to the back and peeped in at the window which he knew to be Reuben's bedroom, and saw a faint glimmer in the fireplace from the smouldering ashes of the fire Janet had kindled before she went to bed.

As he peered through the window, which was a lattice, he found it was unfastened; and, pushing it open, he climbed into the house and groped about for matches. On striking a light he found Reuben's bed had been slept in, but in that room there was no trace of Janet's presence. He listened attentively, but not a sound was to be heard except the slow ticking of the clock in the kitchen, whither he next crept on tip-toe. It was empty, and, as far as Mark could judge, no one had been there but Reuben, whose chair by the fireplace stood just as he had left it.

Mark, however, determined to pursue his investigations still further. If Janet were not in the house, he could not do better than make use of this opportunity to look for any letters from her in Reuben's desk and pockets. First of all, though, he might as well go upstairs.

Accordingly, up he went. The door of Janet's room was open, and Mark not being troubled with any delicacy of feeling—reverence of any kind was foreign to his character—walked in and found his suspicions confirmed. Janet's bed was open, just as, apparently, she had jumped out of it. There were articles of clothing lying about the room, for she had evidently made but a hasty toilet; and there was—yes, there was a baby's sock on the floor, a baby's hood and cloak carefully folded on a chest of drawers.

He picked up the pink sock and put it in his pocket. It was a piece of circumstantial evidence which might be useful after this night of surprises was over.

Janet had been home, then, and the baby was hers. These two facts were clearly established. But what Reuben could be doing with the infant in the middle of the night was as great a mystery as ever. That, however, did not trouble Mark so much as the fact that, though she had evidently been in the house that night, Janet was not to be found.

Where was she?

Was she hiding? He searched every hole and corner of the cottage in which it was possible for Janet to conceal herself; and at last, satisfied that she was not in the house, he left it by the same window he had entered by, and returned through the Rectory grounds to the old tree, resolved to take charge of the baby; not from any philanthropic motives, but because he thought if he had the child he possessed a most powerful means of forcing Janet to consent to his wishes. Instead of flying from him, she would rush to him to recover her infant, if she heard it was with him. The baby was a magnet whose power of attraction he was certain Janet would be unable to resist. He might repel; the child would attract; and its influence would counterbalance his.

Inspired with this idea, he ran like a hunted fox down the hill to the canal. But when he reached the greensward the first object that caught his eye was the great form of the blacksmith lying prone in front of the hollow tree, the light of the moon shining full on his face.

"Is he dead?" muttered Mark, as he bent over the prostrate figure.

Reuben had fallen on his side with his arms stretched up over his head, his mighty fists clenched as in agony. Mark touched one, half expecting to find it cold and stiff; but the fingers relaxed when he touched them, and, though unconscious, Reuben was breathing heavily. Satisfied that he was not in the presence of a corpse, Mark's thoughts reverted to the infant, but on looking into the tree he found the child was gone; only Reuben's coat remained.

Mark gnashed his teeth with rage when he found the child was gone, and, consequently, his plan frustrated.

"Fool that I was not to take it with me," he muttered; "she has got it herself now, I'll be bound; but where the dickens is she?"

Neither the unconscious giant at his feet, nor the trees which surrounded him were able to answer this question, and Mark now bethought him that the best thing he could do was to turn his attention to Reuben. To move him alone was impossible; he must knock up some of the neighbours if the blacksmith did not recover consciousness. But before doing this Mark doubled up the coat and put it under Reuben's head for a pillow, turned him over on to his back, and then fetching some water in his own hat he tried to bring him back to life; but in vain.

"He hasn't fainted. I count he is in a fever," said Mark, desisting from his efforts and running to the nearest cottage for help.

It was now about three o'clock, and the inmates of the cottage Mark went to were hard to wake. At length a sleepy head appeared at a window to ask what was the matter, and on learning that Reuben Foreman was lying unconscious close by, Tom Liddiatt, the owner of the head, consented to come and give what assistance he could.

"Call Jim, too; we can't lift him alone," said Mark. Jim was

the son of Tom Liddiatt, and an admirer of Janet's, so he was not difficult to persuade to rise and help her father.

"How did you come to find 'un in the middle of the night, Mark?" asked Liddiatt, as the two men followed Mark to the spot where Reuben lay. Mark had conceived it possible this question would be asked, and was ready with an answer: needless to add an untrue one.

"Miss Janet came to the Vicarage and called me," he answered, hoping to rouse the jealousy of the younger man.

"Janet! Why, she hadn't come home this tea-time when my missus was up there," said Liddiatt senior.

"Well, she is home now. At least she is gone for the doctor. And here is Mr. Foreman," said Mark, shortly.

A brief council was now held as to the best course to pursue, when, luckily for Reuben, Mark bethought him of the cottage hospital which had recently been opened in the village, but at present contained no patient. So a gate was taken off the hinges, and Reuben with much difficulty lifted on it and carried to the hospital.

No sooner was Reuben thus disposed of than Mark rushed off to look for Janet. He had little doubt that she had returned to the cottage by now, and the hope of seeing her drove away all sense of fatigue, so he climbed the hill once again with alacrity, but was doomed to disappointment. The cottage was empty; Janet was gone.

Not a trace of her remained; her room was dismantled; not a sign of her presence or of the baby's was to be seen; the clothes Mark had seen on his former visit were gone; to all appearance, Janet had never been in the house, and Mark almost began to doubt if he had been awake the first time he entered the cottage that night. He rubbed his eyes, he scratched his head, but neither of these processes had the stimulating effect he desired on his mental faculties. So he turned on his heel, went downstairs, lighted one of Reuben's pipes, and threw himself into his arm-chair to think over the events of the night. Vera had no doubt fastened the hall door, so he could not get into the Rectory till the servants were up; he might as well therefore remain here. There was no fear of anyone disturbing him, for he had fastened the window, so that no one could get in.

"I can't do much till master's wedding is over; then my time is my own while he is honeymooning, and if I don't find Janet and marry her before Reuben is out of the hospital—if he ever comes out—my name isn't Mark Brown."

And having registered this resolution he fell asleep to dream of babies and mussels, of Janet and Reuben. When he woke it was broad daylight, and the events of the previous night seemed like a confused dream. Two facts, however, convinced him they were realities: he was in Reuben's cottage, and the baby's pink sock was safe in his waistcoat pocket. It was still too early to go to the

Rectory, so he made a fire and got himself a cup of tea, considering that his benevolent attention to Reuben the previous night entitled him to some light refreshment. And while drinking Reuben's tea he considered if it were possible for him to return to the Rectory without the servants knowing he had been out all night.

Fortunately for him he had the stable keys in his pocket, so by telling a lie the matter was simple enough. All he had to do if the servants taxed him with being out was to declare they had locked the back door after he went to do his stable-work that morning. It would involve some exchange of doubtful compliments with Mary, but he should stick to his statement. He did so, though later in the day he had to acknowledge he had been out most of the night; but as Mr. Ryot Tempest condoned this offence, the servants might say what they liked for all Mark cared; his head was too full of Janet to allow him to think of anything else. To find her and intimidate her into marrying him by means of that little tell-tale sock he had in his pocket was now the object of his life.

CHAPTER XIV.

MRS. CANTER FORGETS HER STOPS.

Mrs. Canter despised gardens.

A drying-ground she could see some use in, but a lawn and flower-beds were like most people, she was wont to say, good for nothing except to make work for others to do. Accordingly Mrs. Canter's garden was a drying-ground. Mary Jane did her best to redeem its ugliness by cultivating a few flowers, but her efforts were damped by the wet blankets which her mother literally, as well as figuratively, threw over her plants.

The long grass was beyond Mary Jane, but she sowed seeds and planted bulbs, and Mrs. Canter trod on the seeds and the bulbs as it suited her convenience. Still there was a survival of the fittest, and some crocuses and daffodils, with a few tulips, already rewarded the child's labour, though a prop might any day be driven remorselessly through her choicest root if it facilitated her mother's operations. Three days out of the seven, sheets and towels, shirts and petticoats floated in the air over Mary Jane's flowers, and were periodically examined with a critical eye by her mother. On the morning following Mark's midnight adventures, Mrs. Canter was in her drying-ground pegging some linen on the lines to dry when she was interrupted by the postman.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Canter. Busy as usual?"

"Yes; life's for work, not for play. I was just thinking there are a good many folks in the world would be a deal better for bleaching, as well as my linen. I know two or three I should like to peg on this line with these clothes for an hour or two."

"Ladies or gentlemen?" asked the postman.

"Both. One is a lady; a real lady too, a widow, who is going to be married again to-morrow, more shame for her; and the other is a man; at least he ought to be; but poor things as they all are, he is hardly worthy the name. However, Mark Brown'll come to the gallows one day without any help from me, I daresay."

"Oh! I was half afraid you meant me. I bring more sorrow than comfort to most people in the course of the year, I fear."

"Ah! comfort is for heaven," said Mrs. Canter, unconsciously quoting our greatest poet.

"Well, here is a letter for you, Mrs. Canter; I hope you'll find some comfort in that."

"Not likely. I'll take it as soon as I have propped up this line. Strange, isn't it! One prop will keep a whole line full of clothes off the ground, just as one sensible woman will keep a whole family of fools out of the gutter."

"Ah! I should not mind being one of the family if you were the prop," said the postman, who, though ten years her junior, was a great admirer of Mrs. Canter.

"Mr. Lane, I am a widow," replied Mrs. Canter, putting her arms akimbo and facing her admirer with great dignity.

"I know you are. If you had a husband living I should not have said it," said Mr. Lane, who was a brave man in his way.

"As I said before, Mr. Lane, I am a widow, and I haven't waxed wanton yet; when I do I'll let you know. Mary Jane, let me catch you out here with that baby before breakfast again, and I'll wait on you," said Mrs. Canter, whose temper was ruffled; not by the postman's wooing, or Mary Jane's imprudence, but by the thought of Mr. Ryot Tempest's second marriage, which was uppermost in her mind to-day. The postman saw the moment was not propitious for pressing his suit, and departed; and as Mary Jane knew by experience the sensation of being waited on by her mother was not a pleasant one, she also beat a hasty retreat. And Mrs. Canter, having hung out her linen, proceeded to read her letter.

It was from a friend of Reuben's, and it gave so bad an account of him that Mrs. Canter, who was feeling very anxious as to the effect Janet's arrival might have on her brother, decided to go over for the day and see him. She had an ulterior motive, but that she did not acknowledge even to herself. This was, that she intended to call on Mr. Ryot Tempest and give him the benefit of her opinion on second marriages in general, and his own in particular.

"And I shan't mind my stops to-day, as Reuben says, I can tell him," said Mrs. Canter to herself, as she hastily assumed her weeds, which she always wore on Sundays and when she went out beyond the limits of the drying-ground. To forget her stops, in other words to forget herself, was, in the blacksmith's opinion, one of Norah's faults, and if present on such occasions he was wont to pull her up by saying: "Mind your stops, Norah."

To-day, however, Mrs. Canter seated her portly person in the train with the deliberate intention of not minding her stops. In fact, there was every prospect of her omitting them altogether, particularly if she arrived too late to catch a glimpse of Vera: which she did. During the journey Mrs. Canter's mind was occupied not as might have been supposed with her brother's illness, but with the enormity of Mr. Ryot Tempest's conduct in giving Vera a step-mother so soon after her own mother's death.

"He should have said no, for she asked him, I'll be bound. Half the women do it is my belief, or there would not be so many marriages. Mrs. Jamieson did, as sure as my name is Canter. She might not have said it in plain English, perhaps; she is too cunning for that; but she held up the apple and Master took and ate it like ninety-nine men out of every hundred have done since Adam's time. 'Taint as if they were young, either; there might be some excuse then; but it is true enough, no fool like an old fool! It would be a good day's work to put a stop to that marriage, and I am not so sure I can't do it. Perhaps if Madam Jamieson knew Master Rex had married the blacksmith's daughter, she would not be so keen about marrying his father, for she is as puffed up with pride as an adder with poison, if half I hear of her is true. And she shall know it to-day, as sure as I am a laundress."

Thus mused Norah as the train bore her past the primrose-covered banks which would have delighted Mary Jane's eyes. But her mother was too full of her resolution to try and stop her late master's marriage to pay any attention to primroses. She was impatient to get to Woodford, for now that she had decided on her course of action she found she would have to make haste or she would not do all she wanted to do in the day. She decided to call at the Rectory and see what was to be done with the bridegroom on her way up to Reuben's cottage; there she would have some dinner and then get a lift over to Mrs. Jamieson's, and give that lady a little wholesome advice before she returned to Marling.

However, in this case circumstances somewhat changed Mrs. Canter's plans. In the first place, when she reached the Rectory she found no one at home; Vera had left two hours earlier, and Mr. Ryot Tempest was in the church superintending the decorations for his wedding the next day. The bishop was to perform the ceremony, but the wedding was to be a very quiet one, as both bride and bridegroom were still in mourning. This information Norah learnt from Mary the parlour-maid. She received it with sundry sniffs and snorts of indignation and sarcastic comments; and having obtained it she declined to go indoors and rest, but said she would look in at the church and speak to the Rector there.

The bump of reverence was not much developed on Mrs. Canter's head; she had as little of that quality for places as she had for people; so she walked up the aisle of the little church, expressing

her opinion on what she saw, aloud, for the benefit of the decorators.

About half-a-dozen girls and some children were very busy twining garlands of flowers round the pillars; Mr. Ryot Tempest was nailing a text over the Communion-table; two ladies were trimming up the font; and another lady in widow's mourning, whom Norah knew to be Mrs. Jamieson, was sitting on a front bench looking on with an air of interest.

"Well, I am sure! one fool makes many. Turning a church into a ball-room because the parson is marrying a second time! The font, too! Law, they won't want that, I should think! I'd have let that alone for decency's sake if I had been any of them. Humph! Pretty goings on indeed. I wonder if there'll be a sane person left in the parish to-morrow?"

As Mrs. Canter gave vent to these sentiments, she was walking up the aisle looking about her in all directions and giving her head a series of scornful little tosses which jerked her crape veil about in a comical fashion. Mrs. Jamieson looked round and wondered who this portly widow with so little regard for propriety could be; though as Mrs. Canter's fame had reached her ears, she shrewdly expected it was no less a person. Her behaviour was so strange that she decided to anticipate the office of rectoress by a few hours and administer a gentle reproof.

"My good woman, do you know this is a church?" she said in a low voice as she rose and went towards Mrs. Canter.

"To be sure I do; I am not blind. I have come to speak to Mr. Tempest, if he don't tip up that table he is standing on and break his neck before I reach him."

"The altar, you mean," said Mrs. Jamieson, with a pious shudder at such irreverence.

"No, I don't, ma'am. A spade is a spade, not a spoon, and a table is a table, not an altar; and that is nothing but a common deal table on four legs, for I covered it myself with red velvet, silk face and cotton back," replied Mrs. Canter aloud.

Any further revelations with regard to the table Mrs. Canter might have made were cut short by Mrs. Jamieson, who, secretly amused at her originality, was nevertheless anxious to get her out of the church and the hearing of the decorators before she gave any more scandal by her criticisms of their work.

"Suppose you come into the porch and tell me what you want," suggested Mrs. Jamieson in a low voice.

"Certainly, ma'am." And the two widows made for the porch, Mrs. Jamieson swimming gracefully down the aisle, her silk and crape rustling gently as she went, Mrs. Canter marching behind her in loud creaking boots. A striking contrast they made, though both were fine women. At the font Mrs. Jamieson paused, and suggested that as the occasion was a wedding, to decorate the

font was an æsthetic anachronism, and the flowers had better be put on the altar.

"I want to tell Mr. Tempest some news, and to give him my opinion of his marriage," said Norah, as Mrs. Jamieson closed the church door.

"Mr. Ryot Tempest will, I am sure, be flattered; and as I am interested in the matter myself, may I ask what you think of it?"

"Do you wish to know my real opinion, ma'am?"

Mrs. Jamieson signified that she did.

"Well, I think Master ought to be ashamed of himself at his time of life, and he a grandfather, too. And as for Mrs. Jamieson, whose first husband is hardly cold in his grave, whipping is too good for her."

Oh! Mrs. Canter, where are your stops?

"I am Mrs. Jamieson," said the bride-elect, with an air intended to crush her opponent utterly.

She might as well have tried to crush stones with an air as Mrs. Canter; she was a woman no one could repress; a traction-engine alone would have sufficed to crush her.

"Oh, I knew that, ma'am," she replied. "You asked me my opinion of Mr. Tempest's marriage; I was not going to alter my opinion or to tell a story because you were the bride."

The woman's insolence was really sublime. It amused Mrs. Jamieson though she was the victim of it, and she wisely decided the best course was to treat the matter as a joke.

"Come, come, Mrs. Canter; you are Mrs. Canter, I am sure, for no one else could be so impertinent. We won't quarrel; perhaps you'll be following my example some day."

Mrs. Canter thought of the postman, and gave an indignant snort by way of protest.

"But, tell me; what do you mean by Mr. Ryot Tempest being a grandfather? He is nothing of the kind," continued Mrs. Jamieson.

"Begging your pardon, Mrs. Jamieson, what I say is true. I was with Master Rex when he was married, and I was with his wife when the baby was born. If it had not been for me there's no telling what might have happened; but Master don't know it yet—that's what I am going to see him about."

Just then Mrs. Jamieson's carriage, which was waiting for her, drew up at the gate, and as she turned to go to it she asked, casually:

"Indeed. I don't think Mr. Ryot Tempest is aware of it. And whom did he marry?"

"My niece, Janet Foreman, the blacksmith's daughter," said Mrs. Canter coolly, secretly enjoying the sensation her news must create in Mrs. Jamieson's mind.

"I don't believe it," said that lady angrily.

"Perhaps not, ma'am, but that won't separate them."

"You are a designing woman," said Mrs. Jamieson, losing her temper; and turning abruptly on her heel she swept down the gravel-path to her carriage.

"Ah! the saucepan must call the kettle black," remarked Mrs. Canter, and congratulating herself on having had the last word, she re-entered the church, and seeing Mr. Ryot Tempest was no longer there, she marched straight to the vestry and knocked imperatively at the door.

The little Rector had that morning received a present from his bride. The present was a cassock, a garment he never had worn, and, had he pleased himself, never would wear, regarding it as he did as a rag of popery. But Mrs. Jamieson had begged him as a personal favour to do so; it was so much more reverent than a coat she affirmed, though how an article of clothing could be considered reverent Mr. Ryot Tempest failed to see. However, for her sake, he had consented. He had just succeeded in buttoning his little self into this garment, and was craning his person about, endeavouring to see the effect in the little square looking-glass which hung in the vestry, when Norah's knock startled him.

"Romish; decidedly Romish; but I think it has a dignified appearance," he muttered complacently as he opened the vestry-door, which he had taken the precaution of locking while he made his way into this reverent clerical garb.

Mrs. Canter was undoubtedly the last person in the world Mr. Ryot Tempest either expected or wished to see at that moment, and he was uncomfortably conscious of the cassock, which he knew would provoke her criticism, as Norah marched in.

"Norah Canter! dear me, I am surprised to see you here. Is Reuben worse?"

"Not that I know of, sir. But excuse me, Mr. Tempest, what have you got on?" said Mrs. Canter, holding her clasped hands in front of her and eyeing her master up and down with curiosity.

"My cassock; it is a modern fashion; one must move with the times," said Mr. Tempest in an apologetic manner.

"I don't think you'll move far in that concern, sir; and as for the times, they are bad indeed. But my time is precious. I hear you are going to be married again to-morrow, Mr. Tempest."

"Yes, the Lord has chastened me with mercy; He has taken away the wife of my youth, but He has vouchsafed to supply her place——"

"Remarkably quickly," interrupted Mrs. Canter. "I don't believe the Lord had anything to do with it; He is too good to go and give Miss Vera a stepmother like Madam Jamieson. So soon after her poor mother's death, too! But you are putting a rod in pickle for your own back, let me tell you, Mr. Tempest, if you marry Mrs. Jamieson."

"We will not discuss my marriage, Norah. What have you come

to me about? I was just going to see your brother when you came in. Of course you know he has been taken to the hospital?" said Mr. Tempest, hoping to divert Mrs. Canter's mind from his affairs to those of her own.

"I didn't know any such thing, sir. Where is Janet, then? She came home last night," exclaimed Mrs. Canter, so astonished that Mr. Ryot Tempest's hope was realised, and she forgot all about the wedding.

"Janet! I know nothing about her. She has been away from home for months in service, I understood."

"Janet came here yesterday to nurse her father. She has been with me all the winter."

"Dear me! this is very odd. I have heard no mention of Janet. Reuben was found insensible by the canal last night, and taken to the hospital by Mark Brown and two other men."

"Then, Mr. Tempest, as sure as you are a living man something dreadful has happened. Janet must be found, and you must help me to find her," exclaimed Mrs. Canter.

"But I am very busy. I have not a moment to spare. I am to be married to-morrow."

"More shame to you, sir. Your wedding will have to wait till Janet is found: that can easily be postponed. In fact, if it was put off altogether it would be more to your credit, Mr. Tempest."

"Norah, really you are forgetting yourself strangely," and Mr. Tempest drew himself up in his cassock and inwardly hoped it lent him an air of dignity to compensate for its Romish tendency.

"Not so strangely as you are forgetting your poor wife, Mr. Tempest," interrupted Norah.

"I really cannot allow this. I—I—I must ask you to leave the vestry unless you remember to whom you are speaking," said Mr. Tempest, pulling at the sash of his new cassock in his nervousness.

"You may ask, but I am not going till I have told you all I have to tell, Mr. Tempest," returned the irrepressible Mrs. Canter.

"Say what you have to say, then, please, for I have no time to lose."

"No more have I, Mr. Tempest, so I may as well tell you at once. Janet must be found, and you must help me to find her, for she is Master Rex's wife."

"Janet! Janet Foreman!" almost shrieked the Rector.

"Janet Tempest, you mean, sir. She was married to Master Rex in my presence last July, and their baby was born five weeks ago. Janet came here with the child last evening, and as sure as I stand here something must have happened. What was Reuben doing by the canal in the middle of the night? What was Mark Brown doing? Where is Janet? Mr. Tempest, we must find her."

But Mr. Ryot Tempest was so dumbfounded by the startling news he had just heard, that he could do nothing but ejaculate "Janet! Janet Foreman! the blacksmith's daughter!"

"Janet Tempest! your son's wife, sir; as good a girl as ever breathed. He insisted on keeping his marriage a secret for fear you should not let him have the rest of the money you have promised him; and Janet, silly thing! agreed to be silent, though I told her she was wrong. I expect Reuben has seen the baby, and that has made him worse; for I believe Janet is that silly she'd rather die herself, or see her father die, than disobey her husband. Something has happened. That magpie didn't cross my path for nothing this morning as I went to the station. Put on your coat, Mr. Tempest, and come with me to the hospital. Perhaps we shall hear something there."

"I'll—I'll follow you," said Mr. Tempest, who was trembling with suppressed emotion. And he looked so miserable and so incapable of action just at present that Mrs. Canter pitied him, and had the grace to leave him alone.

It was a terrible blow to him to learn that his only son—a Ryot Tempest—had made such a mésalliance. Pride of birth was the Rector's greatest weakness; he was wounded in his most vulnerable spot. A Ryot Tempest had stooped from the eminence on which a beneficent Providence had placed both Ryots and Tempests, and had picked up a wife from the gutter. It was wicked; it was cruel; it was almost unbearable!

And Mrs. Jamieson? What would she say? He must tell her, of course, and he was by no means sure that she would not break off her marriage; she would, in his opinion, be quite justified in doing so. Perhaps in his heart of hearts he half hoped she would, for he had some secret qualms as to the widow of his choice. The cassock worried him, and he pulled it off and put on his coat; but the trouble Mrs. Canter had brought him was not so easily laid aside. Not even by his first wife's death-bed had he felt more miserable than he now did on the eve of his second marriage. He thought of Vera, and his conscience told him he was not treating her as her mother would have liked it. Was this low marriage of Rex's a judgment on him for refusing to accept Captain Raleigh as a son-in-law?

Should he relent and send for Captain Raleigh? Would the equilibrium of the Ryot Tempest family be restored if, now that Rex had dragged down the male side of the house, Captain Raleigh were put into the other scale?

Mr. Ryot Tempest could not decide this knotty question. He felt utterly miserable. His wife dead; his son married to a daughter of the people—for so he phrased his trouble; his own daughter's life made unhappy by his act; his own future happiness doubtful; he almost wished he were lying by the side of the wife of his youth, the love of his life, at Avranches. He sank into a chair, and bending his chin on his chest, covered his eyes with one of his hands, and sat there for half-an-hour. When at last he got up, his eyes were red with weeping, though it was neither Rex nor Vera he had been

thinking of, but their mother, whom he had truly loved, though he was marrying another wife the next day.

Unless—there was a fear, a chance, a hope—Mrs. Jamieson might decline to connect herself with the blacksmith's family. He must go and see her, and communicate the disastrous news. But then he remembered Janet had to be found before he would be allowed to attend to his own affairs; so he went home, intending to send Mark out to institute inquiries. There, as he entered the house, to his dismay, he heard Norah's voice inquiring for him, a sound about as welcome to him as the baying of the hounds to the hunted stag; but welcome or unwelcome he must consent to see her, and learn if Janet Foreman; no, Janet Tempest—Rex must drop the Ryot—were found.

Mrs. Canter was a woman who rose to the occasion. In cases of emergency she was invaluable. Water was her element, whether we take it figuratively, as a type of trouble and unrest, or literally as the medium through which her professional duties were performed. She revelled in troubles, she delighted in washing. When things all went smoothly around her, and there was no washing to be done, her temper was ruffled. But now Mr. Tempest knew by the subdued tone she was speaking in something serious had happened. Norah was calm and self-possessed, her surroundings were therefore in a state of chaos.

"Here is the master. Reuben is very bad indeed, sir. The doctor says it'll go very hard with him," said Mrs. Canter, as the Rector entered the hall.

"Indeed, Norah, I am very sorry to hear it; what is the matter?"

"Brain-fever. The doctor says he must have had a terrible shock last night. He is delirious, and keeps saying——"

"Come into my room, Norah," interrupted the Rector. "And tell Mark I want him," he added to Mary.

"All he says is, 'The child, the child, I have lost the child,' but whether he saw Janet last night or not I can't make out; he does not mention her name," proceeded Norah.

"Perhaps he means the baby," suggested the Rector.

"He does not know she has one, unless she told him last night. If so that would account for the shock, as Janet never told him she was married, I am sure. But it's no use wondering what a delirious man means. The worst of it is, sir, there is no sign of Janet. I have been up to the cottage since I saw you; the key was in Reuben's pocket; and she does not seem to have been home at all. Yet Mark Brown says she called him last night."

"Come in, Mark," interrupted the Rector, as Mark knocked at the study-door. "Perhaps you can help us. Just be good enough to tell us as quickly as possible how you found Reuben Foreman last night. How came you to know he was lying insensible by the canal, Mark?'

"Well, sir, it was the mussels," said Mark.

"The mussels! what do you mean?"

"We had mussels for supper in the kitchen, sir, and I could not sleep after I got to bed, so I put on my clothes and sat by the window looking at the moon, for it was as light as day. Presently I saw Reuben come through our grounds by the short cut from his cottage, and as I knew he was ill, I wondered what he could be doing. The more I wondered, the less I liked it. So at last, asking your pardon for the liberty I took, which I know was not quite square, I slipped down and went out after him. I went down the drive, for I heard the gate go, but when I got to the canal I saw nothing of Reuben till I walked a little way, and there, by the hollow-tree, I found him insensible. I saw he was alive, and I went and knocked up the Liddiatts, and we took him to the cottage-hospital. And that is every word I know, sir."

Mark said all this as coolly as if it were an exact narrative of what had taken place, and Mr. Ryot Tempest believed him implicitly. Not so Mrs. Canter; her opinion of Mark Brown did not permit her to put the slightest faith in his story.

"I thought Janet came and called you," said Norah.

"Janet! I haven't seen her since she left here six months ago, as true as I am a living man!"

"That will do, Mark; there is no need for strong language; we believe all you have told us," said the Rector.

"I don't, sir; I don't believe half. Mark Brown, if you have done anything to Janet, it'll be the worst day's work you ever did in your life. Why did you tell the Liddiatts she came for you and was gone for the doctor?"

"It was not true if I did. But though I didn't see her, Janet was home last night."

"How do you know?" asked his listeners in the same breath.

"Because I found this inside the tree close by Reuben." And, as Mark spoke, he laid the little pink baby's sock he had picked up by his master, and gave Mrs. Canter a triumphant leer.

"That is the child's, sir; I knitted it myself, and I saw Janet put it on the baby when she left my house. She has been home, that is certain. As for Mark, we shall never get the truth out of him, so the sooner you send him about his business, the better," said Mrs. Canter.

"I have told you all I know," said Mark sulkily, marvelling at the coolness with which Mrs. Canter spoke of Janet's supposed disgrace.

"You can go, Mark. Well, Norah, this is a strange business. My own idea is you will find Janet has gone home; there was evidently a scene between her and her father last night; perhaps Reuben turned her out of the house and then repented; if so, she would be sure to go back to you. You must go home to-night, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, because of the children."

"Well, you had better go by the next train and telegraph to me if Janet is there, or as soon as she arrives. Meanwhile, I will make

very inquiry here. We may learn something at the station; and perhaps I may get more out of Mark if there is more to be got. But I have very little doubt you will find Janet at your house when you get home," said the Rector, secretly anxious to be rid of his unwelcome guest.

As this seemed the best course to pursue, Mrs. Canter agreed to it. She learnt at the station that Janet had arrived the previous evening, but had not been seen since; therefore she was not surprised on getting home to find Janet was not there.

Mary Jane and the children were safe, and a washerwoman was superintending the drying of the clothes; but no Janet had been seen that day. Mrs. Canter went back to the post-office and telegraphed to Mr. Tempest, and then she put off her best things, and did sad work among Mary Jane's flower-beds as she made up for the shortcomings in the work of her substitute, who, she averred, had as much idea of drying clothes as Janet's baby had of washing them.

Mr. Ryot Tempest received the telegram about four o'clock that afternoon, but by that time he was in a position to enlighten Mrs. Canter as to Janet's whereabouts.

CHAPTER XV.

AN INFANT CRYING IN THE NIGHT.

JANET woke about half-an-hour after Reuben had stolen her baby from her. On waking, her first thought was for her child. Her arm, which had held it when she went to sleep, was empty; and, seized with a panic lest she had smothered it—a panic common to all young mothers—she started up and felt for it; felt in fear and trembling, dreading that her hands should come in contact with a little cold corpse. No, it was not under her. She breathed freer. She threw off the bed-clothes and felt all over the bed. It might have slipped down under the clothes, but it was not there. Then it occurred to her it must have fallen out of the bed. Oh! horror! it would cry if it were alive, and a death-like stillness was all around her. She jumped up, stepping carefully, and struck a light, though the room was almost light enough for her to see by the moon that her baby was not there. She searched in vain; there was no baby, dead or alive, to be found. Frightened as she was, her mother's instinct gave her presence of mind, and, throwing a petticoat over her shoulders, she ran downstairs to her father's room; but, to her still greater horror, she found his bed was empty. She rushed into the kitchen; that, too, was empty. She flew back into Reuben's room, and found his clothes were gone. She tried the front door, and found it was locked.

Reuben, then, had dressed and gone out, locking the door behind

him. And the baby—Janet had not a doubt, he must have taken that with him.

Why? For what purpose?

It was now a little after one o'clock, and Janet had been awake when the kitchen clock struck twelve, so an hour was the outside limit to the start her father had of her. But oh! what might he not do with her baby in an hour? He was delirious, no doubt, when he robbed her. Mere anger would never so far have transported him.

A crowd of thoughts passed through Janet's mind as she hastily threw on some clothes. Her shawl, which she had left in the kitchen, was gone. No doubt he had wrapped the child in it. She had no time to look for another. She rushed to the door in her hat and dress, forgetting she was locked in; but neither locks nor bolts could avail to keep the frantic mother a prisoner. She was nimble, though large, and to squeeze herself out of the window in Reuben's room was the work of a minute.

Once outside the cottage, she had no notion where to go. True, there was not much choice. She must either go up or down, for there was no road to the right or left; and, perhaps because to go down was the easier course, rather than from any real motive; perhaps her guardian-angel guided her steps; she ran down the hill as fast as her legs could carry her. Fortunately, the bright moonlight enabled her to see all around her; so, if Reuben were within sight, she would be sure to discover him.

Janet, having passed her life in a hill-country, was sure-footed; but, on looking back on that night in after years, it was a marvel to her how she ever reached the valley in safety, for the path was both steep and rough, and she plunged down it like a mad, hunted creature, feeling like one intoxicated. She seemed to have lost control of her limbs, and, if her feet touched the ground, as she knew they did, she did not feel it. Her calm nature was stirred to a pitch of excitement she had not known herself to be capable of feeling; it seemed that her previous existence had been a dream, and she had suddenly awakened to the consciousness that life possessed powers of suffering and of enjoyment beyond her conception.

The truth was, Janet was a woman whose strongest passion was maternal love. She was an affectionate daughter, a devoted and loving wife, but her child had called forth the ruling passion of her nature; and, until she missed it from her side, she was not aware how strong were the fibres by which the little creature had wound itself round her heart. She was terrified now by the strength of her own feelings. The purest of all passions is maternal love. Filial love is a beautiful thing, conjugal love a holy thing, but maternal love is more. And, being the purest, it is also the strongest of all passions the most lasting, the most unselfish, but it is only felt in all its full strength by the pure in heart.

When Janet reached the bottom of the hill, she paused. She was standing on level ground, where the path forked; the narrow lane she had just come out of went on into the village, but to her left was the open field of greensward between the canal and the Rectory grounds. The canal water, glistening under the silvery moon, looked cold and cruel, and, with a shudder, Janet was turning away and going on to the village when a faint sound, like the wail of an infant, reached her ear. She stood still, holding her heart, lest its loud beating should drown the other sound; she listened, straining every nerve to catch the welcome sound. Yes, there it was again, faint, but undoubtedly the cry of an infant.

> "An infant crying in the night,
> An infant crying for the light,
> And with no language but a cry."

And from the breaking heart of the mother there went up to heaven a cry in the night—a cry for light to guide her to her lost infant.

She moved a step or two in the direction of the cry, and now she was sure, not only that it was an infant, but that it was her infant to whose wailing she was listening. Guided by the crying, she advanced towards the tree, searching the fence in which it stood as she went, when suddenly she remembered how, as a child, she had often hidden things in the hollow tree close by, and, dashing forwards, she threw herself on the ground in front of it, and with trembling hands and streaming eyes, her bosom heaving with heavy sobs, she drew out her precious baby, which was lying on Reuben's coat just as Mark had left it. Her shawl, which Reuben had wrapped carefully round it, was hanging to its little feet.

Inarticulate murmurs, broken words, passionate exclamations of love fell from Janet's lips between the showers of kisses and tears she rained on the boy, whose crying changed its tone directly he felt his mother's arms around him. Then she scanned him eagerly in the moonlight, she felt his little soft bones, she strained him to her bosom again and again. And then satisfied that he was whole; though whether so delicate a child would survive the exposure was doubtful enough to cast a shadow over the joy she felt in recovering her lost darling; she wrapped the shawl round him, and with the skirt of her dress over her own head, she hurried back to the cottage.

The danger was not over though the child was found. Reuben might meet her at any moment, and in his delirium kill both her and the child; for that he could have acted, as he apparently had done, in his sober senses, she would not believe. Her one thought was to escape from him. She didn't think of her father's danger; she didn't realise it; all she thought of was her child's safety, and there was no safety for it in Reuben's cottage. She must leave home at once;

she would return to get a few clothes, for she was only half-dressed; but this she must do cautiously, lest her father had gone home in her absence; and, having got all she wanted, she must set off, though it was the middle of the night, on her way back to Marling. There were no trains till seven o'clock, and it was now about two; to walk the whole way was impossible; but there was a station on the line to Marling, seven miles from Woodford, to which she determined to walk and wait there if it were open; if not, at the inn till the first train passed.

On getting back to the cottage, she listened outside, but there was not a sound to be heard; there was no light, the door was still locked, and the window just as she had left it. So, satisfied that Reuben was still out, she put the baby carefully down on the wide window-sill inside the window, and then, with some difficulty, got in herself; for it was not as easy to get in as it had been to get out.

Listening anxiously the while, she put on the rest of her clothes, and packed the carpet bag she had brought with her; and then, as there was no sign of Reuben to be seen from the window, she tidied her room, and putting a piece of bread and butter in her pocket, took the baby and the bag, and got safely out of the window a second time. Her shortest road was down the pitch and through the village; but Janet was afraid to go this way lest she should meet her father; so she chose a longer way, which obliged her first to go to the top of the hill to get into the high road which wound down into the valley. It added a mile to her walk, but she preferred this to running the risk of coming in contact with her father, who she felt sure would return to the tree in which he had left the baby. As she walked along the lonely moonlit road, thanking God that the night was not dark—for, like many country girls, Janet was afraid to be out in the dark—she pondered over her father's conduct, and the more she puzzled over it, the less she liked it. That he had meant mischief to the child she felt certain, and again and again she clasped it closer to her, rejoicing over it that it was still safe.

So taken up with the child was she, that it scarcely occurred to her to think of Reuben's safety; and indeed by the time she had passed through Woodford and mounted the opposite hill, she was so tired she hardly knew how to go any further. Now that the excitement was wearing off, the reaction set in, and she began to realise that the strength she had been feeling was fictitious. And then a terrible fear seized her lest she should faint out here alone in the night; faint with her precious baby in her arms; for his sake she must do nothing of the kind. Tired she was; cold also, for the night air was keen, though there was no wind; exhausted, too; but she must not give in; for her child's sake she must struggle on. She was now walking through the wood in which Captain Raleigh had proposed to Vera, and was about half-way between Woodford and Ashchurch, where Mrs. Jamieson lived. Return to Woodford she dared not; she must

go on; and unless her strength revived she must knock up someone at Ashchurch and ask for shelter for her baby's sake.

Suddenly she remembered the bread and butter she had in her pocket, and sitting down on a felled tree she ate it slowly, and felt, after a long rest, able to resume her walk. She struggled on for another mile, when again the faint, exhausted feeling seized her, and she was obliged to stop again and rest. She sat down on the carpet bag this time and tried to remember how far she was from the nearest house. As well as she could calculate, she was a mile or rather more from Mrs. Jamieson's lodge-gate, and she determined, if she could get so far, to take shelter there, as she knew the lodge-keeper to be a kind-hearted woman and a friend of her father's.

Hitherto she had loyally determined to suffer anything rather than disobey her husband, but that her child would be in any danger by her reticence had not occurred to her. Reuben's conduct, however, had shown her she had been running a great risk, and as she pursued her lonely walk that night she had resolved that though she would keep her husband's name a secret, she would no longer conceal the fact of her marriage. So as she sat by the road-side she took her wedding-ring, which she wore suspended by a cord round her neck, and put it on her finger.

Then she rose and set off again wearily. But the bag was heavy, and she did not know how to carry it as well as the baby. She kept stopping every few minutes and putting it down to rest her aching arm, till at last she put it inside a field and determined to leave it there. If it were stolen she could not help it. All she could hope to do was to reach the Grange Lodge with her baby in safety. She had still half a mile to walk, and the faint feeling came so often that she was obliged constantly to stop and sit down on the bank by the road-side, and each rest was longer than the last.

It was now broad daylight, and she expected soon to meet some of the mill hands on the way to their work. If only she could reach the lodge first! They were a rough set, and if they recognised her might be very troublesome. A turn of the road brought her in sight of the lodge, and the sight gave her strength to struggle on till she reached the door. She knocked as loudly as her failing strength would let her, and then sank down on the door-step her baby on her knee, while she exerted every power she possessed to retain consciousness.

Fortunately the baby woke and cried, and its crying did what Janet's feeble knock had failed to do: it awoke Mrs. Tanner, the lodge-keeper, who hastened down to see who her early visitors could be. As she opened the door, Janet, knowing the effort she was making was no longer so necessary, fainted, and would have fallen backwards as the door was opened, but the good woman caught her, and placing her flat on the floor took the baby and put it safely into an easy-chair, while she restored the mother to consciousness.

"Janet Foreman! My patience, who'd have thought it! It is Janet sure enough, and married, too, for here is her wedding-ring. And a beauty it is, fit for Mrs. Jamieson herself," soliloquised Mrs. Tanner. And then, being wise as well as kind, she asked no questions when Janet revived a little, but made up a bed in her front room and got her into it as quickly as possible.

"Don't let father know I am here; I am going on to Aunt Norah by the first train," said Janet in a faint voice.

"Trust me, my dear. You are too ill to move from here to-day, but no one shall know you are here, unless Madam herself should come in, which isn't likely. You go to sleep, and you'll feel better when you wake."

Janet was too ill to argue, and as rest seemed the one thing she most desired just then, she asked for her baby, and was sound asleep before she had been an hour in the cottage.

As unlikely things often come to pass, it happened that when Mrs. Jamieson returned from the church, after her encounter with Mrs. Canter, she sent the carriage on at the lodge, and got out to pay Mrs. Tanner a farewell visit. The Grange, which belonged to her, was to remain empty until Mr. Ryot Tempest became archdeacon, and then Mrs. Jamieson hoped to persuade him to let the Rectory, and live at the Grange. Meanwhile, Mrs. Tanner was to take care of it, and Mrs. Jamieson now looked in to make some final arrangements.

"Dear me, Mrs. Tanner, surely that is a baby crying! Who have you staying with you?" she asked, as she rustled into the kitchen.

"Well, ma'am, it is a young married woman, and she seems to be in trouble; she is going on to her aunt's as soon as she is well enough. I have not asked any questions, but she came here with her baby early this morning."

"What's her name?"

"Janet Foreman, Reuben Foreman's daughter, but I don't know who her husband is. There is a mystery about her, for she has begged me not to let anyone know she is here, especially her father, who she seems afraid of."

"Janet Foreman! Here in your house? You amaze me! As for her father, he is very ill in the Woodford Hospital. But you must take great care of her. Her husband is a gentleman, but I can't tell you more at present. Can I see her?"

"She is asleep now, ma'am."

"Don't disturb her, then; keep her here till you hear from me again. I'll send down chicken and jelly, and some wine, as soon as I get home; I shall be in again in the course of the day. How strange she should have come here."

It was on the tip of Mrs. Jamieson's tongue to add that Norah Canter was in Woodford; but not wishing to run the risk of another interview with that lady, she stopped herself in time, and went

home wondering how Mr. Ryot Tempest would break the news of his son's mésalliance to her. She would not have long to wonder, for she was expecting him directly after luncheon.

Mr. Ryot Tempest was late, for he had been trying in vain to obtain any news of Janet. And he now arrived at the Grange with a secret hope that courage would be given him to suggest to his bride-elect that their marriage be postponed till some satisfactory news of his daughter-in-law were obtained. He was thoroughly frightened about her, for in Reuben's state there was no telling what he might not have done to her. The very fact that he was found insensible in the middle of the night by the canal side was a very suspicious one.

If poor Mr. Ryot Tempest were about to be hanged instead of married on the morrow he could hardly have felt more wretched than he did when he arrived at the Grange that afternoon. He was painfully nervous, as Mrs. Jamieson saw at a glance. She also shrewdly suspected that it was not only the news of Rex's marriage which so depressed him. In fact she made a very near guess as to the real state of his feelings, and when he stammered out: "My dear friend, I am in terrible trouble!" she answered in her sweetest tone:

"I know all about it; more than you do, perhaps; so don't let me see any more knitted brows to-day, please."

She pushed a footstool towards him and seated herself on it, resting her clasped white hands on one of his knees, an attitude she had arranged before he arrived.

"These little men are very awkward to manage; a tall man I should have had no difficulty with; but I tower over Ryot, and he is so desperately shy, which makes things still more difficult," she thought. Then the footstool suggested itself and solved the problem.

She laid a slight stress on the word "to-day," and bent her face so that the blood rushed into it and did duty for a blush.

"I fear my Poppy can hardly know the disgrace that has come upon me or she would hardly look so bright," said the elderly bridegroom, bending his head close to his bride's.

"Indeed, I do; Mrs. Canter has told me that Rex—I may call him so, mayn't I?—has married beautiful Janet Foreman, the daughter of that great handsome giant of a blacksmith. They *will* do it, you know, sometimes, these young men; and as he is out in Manitoba, it won't matter so much as it otherwise would. He must keep there, of course; and she must be sent out to him at once before the news of their marriage gets abroad."

"But she can't be found. She has been missing since last evening," said the Rector, the cloud on his brow beginning to melt under the benign rays of Mrs. Jamieson's presence.

"She is now at my lodge with her baby, and Mrs. Tanner is looking after her."

"At your lodge!" exclaimed Mr. Ryot Tempest, at once relieved and confounded: relieved to hear Janet was safe, confounded at the prospect of an interview with her which he foresaw was imminent.

"Yes, but there is not the slightest occasion for you to see her," interrupted Mrs. Jamieson, cleverly divining his thoughts. "Write me a cheque for fifty pounds, give me Rex's address, and I'll undertake to get her an outfit and send her out to him without troubling you at all in the matter. I mean to take my share of your troubles, you know," she added, with her sweetest smile.

"You will be taking more than your share if you do that," said Mr. Tempest, the cloud passing quite away under this genial influence. "But I am very much relieved to hear she is safe. I was terribly afraid something had happened last night; something so serious as, perhaps, even to have rendered the postponement of our marriage necessary."

"And that was what made you look so miserable when you came in? Well, under the circumstances, I forgive you. There was nothing else, was there?"

"No—o," said Mr. Tempest, deviating from the truth. "Only I have been thinking of poor Vera, and wondering if I have not been a little hard on her. I think, perhaps, as I have only one objection to Captain Raleigh—his religion—I might consent, only stipulating that Vera should remain a Protestant. You see, Rex's marriage is still more objectionable. What do you advise?"

"That you should do nothing hastily; we shall have plenty of time to discuss that during our honeymoon," she answered. "The first thing we have to do is to see after Janet. She must sail in the next steamer, and by the time we return, the nine days' wonder her marriage will create will have subsided."

"And I must telegraph to Norah Canter that she is safe at once, or we shall have another visit from her."

As both Mr. Tempest and Mrs. Jamieson equally dreaded this catastrophe, they cut short their last afternoon together, and separated that he might telegraph to Norah and complete his arrangements for the next day's ceremony, while Mrs. Jamieson saw after Janet.

Mrs. Jamieson was as capable a woman, in her own way, in an emergency as Mrs. Canter; but to arrange for the outfit and passage of a mother and child to Manitoba in a few hours, those few hours the eve of her own wedding, was a serious undertaking. But it must be done, and Mrs. Jamieson was determined to do it. When she went to the Lodge to see Janet, she found matters were further complicated, because Mrs. Reginald Tempest was still in bed, and if Mrs. Tanner were to be believed too ill to get up that day.

"Very well, keep her in bed to-day; but to-morrow you must take her to Liverpool, Tanner. I'll make out a list of things she will require to-night; these you must get on Friday and Saturday. On

Sunday you can both rest, and on Monday the boat leaves. There is one to-morrow, but that is out of the question. She must go by Monday's boat without fail."

"But if she isn't well enough to go to-morrow," objected Mrs. Tanner.

"She must be well enough. Her husband will meet her at New York; Mr. Ryot Tempest will telegraph to him to do so to-morrow. Tell her that, and you'll find she'll be well enough to-morrow."

"Law, ma'am, you don't mean to say she is Master Rex's wife, surely?" exclaimed Mrs. Tanner.

"Ask no questions, Tanner. Do as I tell you, and hold your tongue about the matter to other people. Feed her up, and take all the care you can of her. Above all, start for Liverpool by the mid-day train to-morrow, and you shall be well paid for your trouble. I will give you all needful directions in writing to-morrow morning. You had better say nothing at all to her to-night; let her get a good night's rest. In the morning give her the letter I shall send down, and be ready when the fly calls for you at half-past eleven. The wedding will be going on then, so you will meet no one on your way to the station. You understand clearly?"

"Yes, ma'am; but if you were only to go in and see her, you would see there is small chance of her being well enough to travel."

"Chance! there must be no chance about it; go she must," said Mrs. Jamieson, flushing angrily. And Mrs. Tanner knew when her mistress spoke in that tone, it was more than her place was worth, old servant as she was, to disobey her.

Janet must go if it killed her.

So resolved Mrs. Tanner that evening while the remembrance of her mistress's frown was still vivid; but the next morning when she gave Janet Mrs. Jamieson's letter to read, Janet was so upset by its contents, coming as they did before she had recovered from the events of the previous night, and while she was in a weak state of health, that she fainted before she had finished dressing.

"My dear, you are not fit to go a long journey to-day. As soon as you have come round, I'll run up to the house and tell Mrs. Jamieson so, if I lose my place for it, that I will."

Accordingly, as Mrs. Jamieson, arrayed in an elaborate morning-gown, was breakfasting off devilled kidneys in her own room, Mrs. Tanner was admitted, and urged by Janet's pale face, informed her it was impossible for them to go to Liverpool that day.

"It is as much as her life is worth, ma'am, and I would not be responsible for the consequences," concluded Mrs. Tanner, after giving a vivid description of Janet's condition.

"Stuff and nonsense, Tanner. No doubt the girl is in an hysterical condition; she'll be all right when once you have started. And as for the responsibility, I'll undertake that," returned Mrs. Jamieson, who

was determined Janet should have started before she and Mr. Ryot Tempest came back from church. And as she spoke, she rose and rang the bell impatiently.

"I suppose I must come down and see after her myself. Go back and tell her I am coming; perhaps that will rouse her," she added angrily.

Tanner retired without replying, but as she went down the drive she pitied Mr. Ryot Tempest from the bottom of her heart.

By the time Mrs. Jamieson reached the lodge, she had to all appearance recovered her temper, and it pleased her to assume her most charming manner to Janet, whom she assured she should always regard as her step-daughter, while she was inwardly trusting she would never set eyes on her again. And before she took her departure Janet was quite as eager to start as Mrs. Jamieson was to be rid of her.

And by the time Mrs. Jamieson was Mrs. Ryot Tempest, Janet and her baby, accompanied by Tanner, were on their way to Liverpool; Janet dressed in a travelling-cloak and hat of Mrs. Jamieson's, her real name and estate now an open secret to her travelling companion.

Her joy at being so suddenly acknowledged in a way as Rex's wife and sent to join him, was clouded by her uncertainty about her father. For though she had heard from Mrs. Tanner that he was in the hospital, she also heard that his life hung in the balance, and for aught Janet could tell she might never see him again. But for this there was no help. She was not strong enough to make any plans for herself, and, as Mrs. Jamieson had explained, she had another father now in Mr. Ryot Tempest. For Rex's sake she must obey him, and as he ordered her to join her husband at once she must do so.

Yet if Janet could have foreseen the consequences of that journey, not all the Ryots and Tempests in the world would have induced her to start that day.

(*To be continued.*)

THE FIRST INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITION.

By Miss Betham-Edwards.

WHO invented Industrial Exhibitions?

The vague notion prevails in England that the late Prince Consort is to be accredited with an initiative so stimulating to art and industry, and so instructive to the world in general. Such a supposition is altogether baseless. The Exposition d'Industrie is a French invention, and the first of the kind dates from the Revolution. It is therefore with peculiar appropriateness that the Jubilee of French liberties is to be celebrated by the forthcoming display on the Champs de Mars; the centenary of the first may almost be called coincident with that of the other, one of the numerous instances of scientific ardour shown in the stormiest times of the modern world.

As our late astronomer royal, Sir George Biddell Airy, has pointed out, "in the hottest times of the Revolution," enterprises were set on foot which had never been attempted in England. The Convention, sitting for four years only, in intellectual activity and achievement, outrivalled the National Assembly itself. Seated on bare benches, working eighteen hours a day, with invading hosts on the frontiers, armies of rebellious citizens on French soil, the members of this body could yet call into existence, one after another, those noble institutions which have stimulated French intellect to high-water mark, and still educate the youth of France.

The Ecole Polytechnique, school of mathematicians and engineers, the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers, the Conservatoire de Musique, the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, the Institut, the Ecole Normale, or training school for teachers, to say nothing of a vast scheme of elementary education—all these were the work of the Convention. Balloons were also used for the first time in military reconnoître, voyages of scientific discovery organised, and the accurate measurement of the globe attempted. "There is one measurement which is worth mentioning," writes Sir George Airy in his popular lectures on astronomy, "on account of the extraordinary times in which it was effected. It was the first measure extending from Dunkerque to Barcelona, and which was afterwards continued to a small island near Minorca. It is worth mentioning because it was done in the hottest times of the Revolution. We are accustomed to consider that time as one purely of anarchy and bloodshed; but the energetic Government of France, though labouring under the greatest difficulties, could find the opportunity of sending out an expedition for these scientific purposes, and thus did actually, during the hottest

times of the Revolution, complete a work to which nothing equal has been attempted in England." *

Although suggested and planned during the Convention, the first Industrial Exhibition was not opened till 1798, that is to say, in the Year Six of the Republic, the third of the Directory, and during Napoleon's campaign in Egypt. Bald as are the accounts given in contemporary records, we may, nevertheless, compute the importance of the scheme and the success with which it was attended.

What a contrast is presented by the description of that first modest show and the splendid industrial pageants attracting hundreds of thousands from the four quarters of the globe since. Little, perhaps, did the projectors of the earliest gathering together of competitors in the arts, manufactures and sciences forecast the gigantic proportions these assemblages were destined to take. Yet as surely as the oak tree is the product of the acorn, so surely must the forthcoming celebration, crowned by the Eiffel Tower, be regarded as the outcome of the little Industrial Exhibition opened on the same ground nearly a hundred years ago.

The site selected then, as now, was the Champs de Mars. The building erected for the purpose was an amphitheatre, at the back of which was a square enclosure adorned with porticos, and here the more precious objects were placed. No charge was made to exhibitors for a space, and they were bound to send their own inventions or manufactures only. The number of exhibitors did not exceed a hundred and ten, a paucity to be set down to other causes than indifference or want of enterprise. The opening day was fixed for September 18, but circulars of invention seem not to have been sent out till the preceding month.

The slowness of postal communication, and the difficulty of transport must be taken into account. Moreover, the departmental system had only existed for a few years, and the times were troubled. All kinds of hindrances and obstacles stood in the way of inventors.

The opening was made an occasion of fête and holiday, and was attended with as much state as possible. The prominent figure in the ceremony is François de Neufchâteau, the originator of the scheme : in fact, the real inventor of industrial exhibitions.

In an eloquent oration he now set forth the advantages of competitive industry, and made a touching allusion to the modesty of this experiment.

"I look around in vain," he said, "for exhibits from many departments, the inhabitants of which hardly perhaps were apprised in time to send in contributions. But if an idea so truly patriotic excites regret among those unable this time to come forward as competitors, the purpose of the Government will be fulfilled, and the Year Seven of the Republic, and the second Industrial Exhibition,

* Written 1848.

to be held then, will testify all that emulation can do in stimulating a free people, friendly to the industrial arts."

During the Exhibition, which lasted thirteen days, the porticos were illuminated, orchestral concerts were given, and the period was one of prolonged gala.

Now we come to a very interesting record: that of the awards. We read of no medals being given, only honourable mention.

On the 29 Vendémiaire (October 20) the jury selected the following exhibitors as deserving approval.

Erard, Paris, for improvements in the harp. Léonard, Lyons, for wall papers imitating muslin. Argand and Montgolfier, Paris, for hydraulic machine. William Robinson, for a spinning machine. Whether this English exhibitor was a resident in Paris or not is not stated. Most likely he lived in France, as an international competition was impracticable in the state of Europe.

Five other names occur, all of Parisian manufacturers and artizans, the inventions being respectively in printing, watchmaking, and stuffs made from horsehair and vegetable fibre. Industrial exhibitions were held on a much larger scale in 1801, 1802, and 1806. Two were held in the reign of Louis XVIII., one under Charles X., and three under Louis Philippe, namely, in 1834, 1839, 1844. The Prince Consort revived the idea, and the after history of these colossal gatherings of all nations is familiar to all.

CHANGED!

THE sunshine glimmers across the street,
The children sport in the summer rain;
It was all just so, in the Long Ago,
But the days that were do not come again!

Because there's a voice that I never hear,
Because there's a face that I never see;
The sun may shine on the same old world,
Yet oh, it's a different world to me!

And I have no grave that I had not then,
There's nobody gone across the sea;
But I scarcely smile, and I never sing,
And nothing is as it used to be.

Yes, it's a different world to me,
So little changed—yet so hard to bear;
And some see the face that I never see,
And hear the voice that I never hear!— I. F. M.

FEATHERSTON'S STORY.

AT THE MAISON ROUGE.

IN their new mourning, at the English Church, the Sunday after the interment of Lavinia Preen, appeared Captain and Mrs. Fennel. The congregation looked at them more than at the parson. Poor Nancy's eyes were so blinded with tears that she could not see the letters in her Prayer-Book. Only one little week ago, when she had sat there, Lavinia was on the bench at her side, alive and well; and now—— It was with difficulty Nancy kept herself from breaking down.

Two or three acquaintances caught her hand on leaving the church, whispering a few words of sympathy in her ear. Not one but felt truly sorry for her. The Captain's hat, which had a wide band round it, was perpetually raised in acknowledgment of silent greetings, as he piloted his wife back to their house, the petite Maison Rouge.

A very different dinner-table, this, which the two sat down to from last Sunday's, in the matter of cheerfulness. Nancy was about half-way through the wing of the fowl her husband had helped her to, when a choking sob caught her throat. She dropped her knife and fork.

"Oh, Edwin, I cannot! I cannot eat for my unhappy thoughts! This time last Sunday, Lavinia was seated at the table with us. Now——" Nancy's speech collapsed altogether.

"Come, come," said Captain Fennel. "I hope you are not going to be hysterical again, Nancy. It is frightfully sad; I know that; but this prolonged grief will do no good. Go on with your dinner; it is a very nice chicken."

Nancy gave a great sob, and spoke impulsively. "I don't believe you regret her one bit, Edwin!"

Edwin Fennel in turn laid down his knife and fork and stared at his wife. A curious expression sat on his face.

"Not regret her!" he repeated with emphasis. "Why, Nancy, I regret her every hour of the day. But I do not make a parade of my regrets. Why should I?—to what end? Come, come, my dear; you will be all the better for your dinner."

He went on with his own as he spoke. Nancy took up her knife and fork with a hopeless sigh.

Dinner over, Captain Fennel went to his cupboard and brought in some of the chartreuse. Two glasses, this time, instead of three. He might regret Lavinia, as he said, every hour of the day

possibly he did so; but it did not seem to affect his appetite, or his relish for good things.

Most events have their dark and their light sides. It could hardly escape the mind of Edwin Fennel that by the death of Lavinia the whole income became Nancy's. To him that must have been a satisfactory consolation.

In the afternoon he went with Nancy for a walk on the pier. She did not want to go; said she had no spirits for it; it was miserable at home; miserable out; miserable everywhere. Captain Fennel took her off, as he might have taken a child, telling her she should come and see the fishing boats. After tea they went to church—an unusual thing for Captain Fennel. Lavinia and Nancy formerly went to evening service; he, never.

That night something curious occurred. Nancy went up to bed leaving the Captain to follow, after finishing his glass of grog. He generally took one the last thing. Nancy had taken off her gown, and was standing before the glass about to undo her hair, when she heard him leave the parlour. Her bedroom door, almost close to the head of the stairs, was not closed, and her ears were on the alert. Since Lavinia died, Nancy had felt timid in the house when alone, and she was listening for her husband to come up. She heard him lock up the spirit bottle in the little cupboard below and begin to ascend the stairs, and she opened her door wider that the light might guide him, for the staircase was in darkness.

Captain Fennel had nearly gained the top, when something—he never knew what—induced him to look round sharply, as though he fancied someone was close behind him. In fact, he did fancy it. In a moment, he gave a shout, dashed onwards into the bedroom, shut the door with a bang and bolted it. Nancy, in great astonishment, turned to look at him. He seemed to have shrunk within himself in a fit of trembling, his face was ghastly, and the perspiration stood upon his brow.

"Edwin!" she exclaimed in a scared whisper, "what is the matter?"

Captain Fennel did not answer at first. He was getting up his breath.

"Has Flore not gone?" he then said.

"*Flore!*" cried Nancy in surprise. "Why, Edwin, you know Flore goes away on Sundays in the middle of the afternoon! She left before we went on the pier. Why do you ask?"

"I—I thought—some person—followed me upstairs," he replied, in uneasy pauses.

"Oh, my goodness!" cried timid Nancy. "Perhaps a thief has got into the house!"

She went to the door, and was about to draw it an inch open, intending to peep out gingerly and listen, when her husband pulled her back with a motion of terror, and put his back against

it. This meant, she thought, that he *knew* a thief was there. Perhaps two of them!

"Is there more than one?" she whispered. "Lavinia's silver—my silver, now—is in the basket on the console in the salon."

He did not answer. He appeared to be listening. Nancy listened also. The house seemed still as death.

"Perhaps I was mistaken," said Captain Fennel, beginning to recover himself after a bit. "I daresay I was."

"Well, I think you must have been, Edwin; I can't hear anything. We had better open the door."

She undid the bolt as she spoke, and he moved away from it. Nancy cautiously took a step outside, and kept still. Not a sound met her ear. Then she brought forth the candle and looked down the staircase. Not a sign of anything or anyone met her eye.

"Edwin, there's nothing, there's nobody; come and see. You must have fancied it."

"No doubt," answered Captain Fennel. But he did not go to see for all that.

Nancy went back to the room. "Won't you just look downstairs?" she said. "I—I don't much mind going with you."

"Not any necessity," replied he; and began to undress—and slipped the bolt again.

"Why do you bolt the door to-night?" asked Nancy.

"To keep the thief out," said he, in grim tones, which Nancy took for jesting. But she could not at all understand him.

His restlessness kept her awake. "It *must* have been all fancy," she more than once heard him mutter to himself.

When he rose in the morning, his restlessness seemed still to hang upon him. Remarking to Nancy, who was only half awake, that his nerves were out of order and he should be all the better for a sea bath, he dressed and left the room. Nancy got down at the usual hour, half-past eight; and was told by Flore that monsieur had left word madame was not to wait breakfast for him: he was gone to have a dip in the sea and should probably take a long country walk after it.

Flore was making the coffee at the kitchen stove; her mistress stood by, as if wanting to watch the process. These last few days, since Lavinia had been carried from the house, Nancy had felt easier in Flore's company than when alone with her own.

"That's to steady his nerves; they are out of order," replied Nancy, who had as much idea of reticence as a child. "Monsieur had a great fright last night, Flore."

"Truly!" said Flore, much occupied just then over her coffee pot.

"He was coming up to bed between ten and eleven; I had gone on. When nearly at the top of the stairs he thought he heard someone behind him. It startled him frightfully. Not being prepared

for it, supposing that the house was empty, you see, Flore, of course it would startle him."

"Naturally, madame."

"He cried out and dashed into the bedroom and bolted the door. I never saw anyone in such a state of terror, Flore; he was trembling all over; his face was whiter than your apron."

"Vraiment!" returned Flore, turning to look at her mistress in a little surprise. "But, madame, what had terrified him? What was it that he had seen?"

"Why, he could have seen nothing," corrected Mrs. Fennel. "There was nothing to see."

"Madame has reason; there could have been nothing, the house being empty. But then, what could have frightened him?" repeated Flore.

"Why, he must have fancied it, I suppose. Any way, he fancied someone was there. The first question he asked me was, whether you were in the house."

"Moi! Monsieur might have known I should not be in the house at that hour, madame. And why should he show terror if he thought it was me?"

Mrs. Fennel shrugged her shoulders. "It was a moment's scare; just that, I conclude; and it upset his nerves. A sea bath will put him all right again."

Flore carried the coffee into the salon, and her mistress sat down to breakfast.

Now it chanced that this same week a guest came to stay with Madame Cardiac. Stella Featherston, from Buttermead, was about to make a sojourn in Paris, and she took Sainteville on her route that she might stay a few days with her cousin, Mary Cardiac, whom she had not seen for several years.

Lavinia and Ann Preen had once been very intimate with Miss Featherston, who reached Madame Cardiac's on the Thursday. On the Friday morning Mrs. Fennel called to see her—and, in Nancy's impromptu way, she invited her and Mary Cardiac to take tea at seven o'clock that same evening at the little Maison Rouge.

Nancy went home delighted. It was a little divertisement to her present saddened life. Captain Fennel knitted his brow when he heard of the arrangement, but made no objection in words. His wife shrank at the frown.

"Don't you like my having invited Miss Featherston to tea, Edwin?"

"Oh! I've no objection to it," he carelessly replied. "I am not in love with either Cardiac or his wife, and don't care how little I see of them."

"He cannot come, having a private class on to-night. And I could not invite Miss Featherston without Mary Cardiac," pleaded Nancy.

"Just so. I am not objecting."

With this somewhat ungracious assent Nancy had to content herself. She ordered a gateau Suisse, the nicest sort of gateau to be had at Sainteville; and told Flore that she must for once remain for the evening.

The guests appeared punctually at seven o'clock. Such a thing as being invited for one hour and strolling in an hour or two after it was a mark of English breeding never yet heard of in the simple-mannered French town. Miss Featherston, a smart, lively young woman, wore a cherry-coloured silk; Mary Cardiac was in black; she had gone into slight mourning for Lavinia. Good little Monsieur Jules had put a small band on his hat.

Captain Fennel was not at home to tea, and the ladies had it all their own way in the matter of talking. What with items of news from the old home, Buttermead, and Stella's telling about her own plans, the conversation never flagged a moment.

"Yes, that's what I am going to Paris for," said Stella, explaining her plans. "I don't seem likely to marry, for nobody comes to ask me, and I mean to go out in the world and make a little money. It is a sin and a shame that a healthy girl, the eldest of three sisters, should be living upon her poor mother in idleness. Not much of a girl, you may say, for I was three and thirty last week! but we all like to pay ourselves compliments when age is in question."

Nancy laughed. Almost the first time she had laughed since Lavinia's death.

"So you are going to Paris to learn French, Stella!"

"I am going to Paris to learn French, Nancy," assented Miss Featherston. "I know it pretty well, but when I come to speak it I am all at sea; and you can't get out as a governess now unless you speak it fluently. At each of the two situations I applied for in Worcestershire, it was the one fatal objection: 'We should have liked you, Miss Featherston, but we can only engage a lady who will speak French with the children.' So I made my mind up to *speak* French; and I wrote to good M. Jules Cardiac, and he has found me a place to go to in Paris, where not a soul in the household speaks English. He says, and I say, that in six months I shall chatter away like a native," she concluded, laughing.

II.

About nine o'clock Captain Fennel came home. He was gracious to the visitors. Stella Featherston thought his manners were pleasing. Shortly afterwards Charles Palliser called. He apologised for the lateness of the hour, but his errand was a good-natured one. His aunt, Mrs. Hardy, had received a box of delicious candied fruits from Marseilles; she had sent him with a few to Mrs. Fennel,

it that lady would kindly accept them. The truth was, everyone in Sainteville felt sorry just now for poor Nancy Fennel.

Nancy looked as delighted as a child. She called to Flore to bring plates, turned out the fruits, and handed them round. Flore also brought in the gateau Suisse and glasses, and a bottle of Picardin wine, that the company might regale themselves. Charley Palliser suddenly spoke; he had just thought of something.

"Would it be too much trouble to give me back that book which I lent you a week or two ago—about the plans of the fortifications?" he asked, turning to Captain Fennel. "I want it sometimes for reference in my studies."

"Not at all; I ought to have returned it to you before this—but the trouble here has driven other things out of my head," replied Captain Fennel. "Let me see—where did I put it? Nancy, do you remember where that book is?—the heavy one, you know, with red edges and a mottled cover."

"That book? Why it is on the drawers in our bedroom," replied Nancy.

"To be sure; I'll get it," said Captain Fennel.

His wife called after him to bring down the dominoes also; someone might like a game. The Captain did not intend to take the trouble of going himself; he meant to send Flore. But Flore was not in the kitchen, and he took it for granted she was upstairs. In fact, Flore was in the yard at the pump; but he never thought of the yard or the pump. Lighting a candle, he strode upstairs.

He was coming down again, the open box of dominoes and Charley Palliser's book in one hand, the candlestick in the other, when the same sort of thing seemed to occur which had occurred on Sunday night. Hearing, as he thought, someone close behind him, almost treading, as it were, upon his heels, and thinking it was Flore, he turned his head round, intending to tell her to keep her distance.

Then, with a frightful yell, down dashed Captain Fennel the few remaining stairs, the book, and the candlestick, and the box of dominoes all falling in the passage from his nerveless hands. The dominoes were hard and strong, and made a great crash. But it was the yell which had frightened the company in the salon.

They flocked out in doubt and wonder. The candle had gone out; and Charley Palliser was bringing forth the lamp to light up the darkness, when he was nearly knocked down by Captain Fennel. Flore, returning from the pump with her own candle, much damaged by the air of the yard, held it aloft to survey the scene.

Captain Fennel swept past Charley into the salon, and threw himself into a chair behind the door, after trying to dash it to; but they were trooping in behind him. His breath was short, his terrified face looked livid as one meet for the grave.

"Why, what has happened to you, sir?" asked Charles, intensely surprised.

"Oh! he must have seen the thief again!" shrieked Nancy.

"Shut the door; bolt it," called out the stricken man.

They did as they were bid. This order, as it struck them all, could only have reference to keeping out some nefarious intruder, such as a thief. Flore had followed them in, after picking up the débris. She put the book and the dominoes on the table, and stood staring over her mistress's shoulder.

"Has the thief got in again, Edwin?" repeated Mrs. Fennel, who was beginning to tremble. "Did you see him?—or hear him?"

"My foot slipped; it sent me headforemost down the stairs," spoke the Captain at last, conscious, perhaps, that something must be said to satisfy the inquisitive faces around him. "I heard Flore behind me, and——"

"Not me, sir," put in Flore in her best English. "I not upstairs at all; I was out at the pump. There is nobody upstairs, sir; there can't be." But Captain Fennel only glared at her in answer.

"What did you cry out at?" asked Charles Palliser, speaking soothingly, for he saw that the man was pitiably unstrung. "Have you had a thief in the house? Did you think you saw one?"

"I saw no thief; there has been no thief in the house that I know of; I tell you I slipped—and it startled me," retorted the Captain, his tones becoming savage.

"Then—why did you have the door bolted, Captain?" struck in Miss Stella Featherston, who was extremely practical and matter-of-fact, and who could not understand the scene at all.

This time the Captain glared at *her*. Only for a moment; a sickly smile then stole over his countenance.

"Somebody here talked about a thief: I said bolt him out," answered he.

With this general explanation they had to be contented; but to none of them did it sound natural or straightforward.

Order was restored. The ladies took a glass of wine each and some of the gateau, which Flore handed round. Charles Palliser wished good-night and departed with his book. Captain Fennel went out at the same time. He turned into the café on the Place Ronde, and drank three small glasses of cognac in succession.

"Nancy, what did you mean by talking about a thief?" began Madame Cardiac. The whole thing was much exercising her mind.

Upon which, Mrs. Fennel treated them all, including Flore, to an elaborate account of her husband's fright on the Sunday night.

"It was on the stairs; just as it was again now," she said. "He thought he heard someone following behind him as he came up to bed. He fancied it was Flore; but Flore had left hours before. I never saw anyone show such terror in all my life. He said it was Flore behind him to-night, and you saw how terrified he was."

"But if he took it to be Flore, why should he be frightened?" returned Mary Cardiac.

"Pardon, mesdames, but it is the same argument I made bold to use to madame," interposed Flore from the background, where she stood. "There is not anything in me to give people fright."

"I — think—it must have been," said Mrs. Fennel, speaking slowly, "that he grew alarmed when he found it was not Flore he saw. Both times."

"Then who was it that he did see—to startle him like that?" asked Mary Cardiac.

"Why he must have thought it was a thief," replied Nancy. "There's nothing else for it."

At this juncture the argument was brought to a close by the entrance of M. Jules Cardiac, who had come to escort his wife and Stella Featherston home.

These curious attacks of terror were repeated; not often, but at a few days' interval; so that at length Captain Fennel took care not to go about the house alone in the dark. He went up to bed when his wife did; he would not go to the door, if a ring came after Flore's departure, without a light in his hand. By and by he improvised a lamp, which he kept on the slab.

What was it that he was scared at? An impression arose in the minds of the two or three people who were privy to this, that he saw, or fancied he saw, in the house the spectre of one who had just been carried out of it, Lavinia Preen. Nancy had no such suspicion as yet; she only thought her husband could not be well. She was much occupied about that time, having at length nerved herself to the task of looking over her poor sister's effects.

One afternoon, when sitting in Lavinia's room, Flore—who stayed with her for company—had run down to the kitchen to see that the dinner did not burn; Nancy came upon a small, thin, green case. Between its leaves she found three one hundred-franc notes. Twelve pounds in English value. She rightly judged that it was all that remained of her sister's nest egg, and that she had intended to take with her to Boulogne.

"Poor Lavinia!" she aspirated, the tears dropping from her eyes. "Every farthing remaining of the quarter's money she left with me for housekeeping."

But now, a thought came to Nancy. Placing the case on the floor near her, intending to show it to her husband—she was sitting on a stool before one of Lavinia's boxes—it suddenly occurred to her that it might be as well to say nothing to him about it. He would be sure to appropriate the money to his own private uses: and Nancy knew that she should need some for hers. There would be her mourning to pay for; and——

The room door was wide open, and at this point in her reflections, Nancy heard the Captain enter the house with his latch-key, and

march straight upstairs. In hasty confusion, she thrust the little case into the nearest hiding-place, which happened to be the front of her black dress bodice.

"Nancy, I have to go to England," cried the Captain. "How hot you look! Can't you manage to do that without stooping?"

"To go to England!" repeated Nancy, lifting her flushed face.

"Here's a letter from my brother; the postman gave it me as I was crossing the Place Ronde. It's only a line or two," he added, tossing it to her. "I must take this evening's boat."

Nancy read the letter. Only a line or two, as he said, just telling the Captain to go over with all speed upon a pressing matter of business, and that he could return before the week was ended.

"Oh, but, Edwin, you can't go," began Nancy, in alarm. "I cannot stay here by myself."

"Not go! Why, I must go," he said very decisively. "How do I know what it is that I am wanted for? Perhaps that property which we are always expecting to fall in."

"But I should be so lonely. I could not stay here alone."

"Nonsense!" he sharply answered. "I shall not be away above one clear day; two days at the furthest. This is Thursday, and I shall return by Sunday's boat. You will only be alone to-morrow and Saturday."

He turned away, thus putting an end to the discussion, and entered their own room. As Nancy looked after him in despair, it suddenly struck her how very thin and ill he had become; his face worn and grey.

"He wants a change," she said to herself; "our trouble here has upset him as much as it did me. I'll say no more; I must not be selfish. Poor Lavinia used to warn me against selfishness."

So Captain Fennel went off without further opposition, his wife enjoining him to be sure to return on Sunday. The steamer was starting that night at eight o'clock; it was a fine evening, and Nancy walked down to the port with her husband and saw him on board. Nancy met an acquaintance down there; no other than Charley Palliser. They strolled a little in the wake of the departing steamer; Charley then saw her as far as the Place Ronde, and there wished her good-night.

And now an extraordinary thing happened. As Mrs. Fennel opened the door with her latch-key, Flore having left, and was about to enter the dark passage, the same curious and unaccountable terror seized her which had been wont to attack Lavinia. Leaving the door wide open, she dashed up the passage, felt for the match-box, and struck a light. Then, candle in hand, she returned to shut the door; but her whole frame trembled with fear.

"Why, it's just what poor Lavinia felt!" she gasped. "What on earth can it be?—Why should it come to me? I will take care not to go out to-morrow night or Saturday."

And she held to her decision. Mrs. Hardy sent Charley Palliser to invite her for either day, or both days; Mary Cardiac sent Pauline with a note to the same effect; but Nancy returned a refusal in both cases, with her best thanks.

The boat came in on Sunday night, but it did not bring Captain Fennel. On the Sunday morning the post had brought Nancy a few lines from him, saying he found the business on which he had been called to London was of great importance, and he was obliged to remain another day or two.

Nancy was frightfully put out: not only vexed, but angry. Edwin had no business to leave her alone like that so soon after Lavinia's death. She bemoaned her hard fate to several friends on coming out of church, and Mrs. Smith carried her off to dinner. The Major was not out that morning—a twinge of gout in the right foot had kept him indoors.

This involved Nancy's going home alone in the evening, for the Major could not walk with her. She did not like it. The same horror came over her before opening the door. She entered somehow, and dashed into the kitchen, hoping the stove was alight: a very silly hope, for Flore had been gone since the afternoon.

Nancy lighted the candle in the kitchen, and then fancied she saw someone looking at her from the open kitchen door. It looked like Lavinia. It certainly *was* Lavinia. Nancy stood spell-bound; then she gave a cry of desperate horror and dropped the candlestick.

How she picked it up she never knew; the light had not gone out. Nothing was to be seen then. The apparition, if it had been one, had vanished. She got up to bed somehow, and lay shivering under the bed-clothes until morning.

Quite early, when Nancy was at breakfast, Madame Cardiac came in. She had already been to the fish-market, and came on to invite Nancy to her house for the day, having heard that Mr. Fennel was still absent. With a scared face and trembling lips, Nancy told her about the previous night—the strange horror of entering which had begun to attack her, the figure of Lavinia at the kitchen door.

Madame Cardiac, listening gravely, took, or appeared to take, a sensible view of it. "You have caught up this fear of entering the house, Nancy, through remembering that it attacked poor Lavinia," she said. "Impressionable minds—and yours is one of them—take fright just as children catch measles. As to thinking you saw Lavinia——"

"She had on the gown she wore the Sunday she was taken ill: her silver-grey silk, you know," interrupted Nancy. "She looked at me with a mournful, appealing gaze, just as if she wanted something."

"Aye, you were just in the mood to fancy something of the kind," lightly spoke Madame Cardiac. "The fright of coming in had done that for you. I daresay you had been talking of Lavinia at Major Smith's."

"Well, so we had," confessed Nancy.

"Just so; she was already on your mind, and therefore that and the fright you were in caused you to fancy you saw her. Nancy, my dear, you cannot imagine the foolish illusions our fancies play us."

Easily persuaded, Mrs. Fennel agreed that it might have been so. She strove to forget the matter, and went out there and then with Mary Cardiac.

But this state of things was to continue. Captain Fennel did not return, and Nancy grew frightened to death at being alone in the house after dark. Flore was unable to stay longer than the time originally agreed for, her old mother being dangerously ill. As dusk approached, Nancy began to hate her destiny. Apart from nervousness, she was sociably inclined, and yearned for company. Now and again the inclination to accept an invitation was too strong to be resisted, or she went out after dinner, uninvited, to this friend or that. But the pleasure was counter-balanced by having to go in again at night; the horror clung to her.

If a servant attended her home, or any gentleman from the house where she had been, she made them go indoors with her whilst she lighted her candle; once she got M. Gustave's errand-boy to do so. But it was almost as bad with the lighted candle—the first feeling of being in the lonely house after they had gone. She wrote letter after letter, imploring her husband to return. Captain Fennel's replies were rich in promises: he would be back the very instant business permitted; probably "to-morrow, or the next day." But he did not come.

One Sunday, when he had been gone about three weeks, and Nancy had been spending the day in the Rue de la Pomme Cuite, Mary Cardiac walked home with her in the evening. M. Jules had gone to see his cousin off by the nine o'clock train; Mademoiselle Priscille Cardiac, who had come in to spend the day with them. She lived at Drecques.

"You will come in with me, Mary?" said Ann Fennel, as they gained the door.

"To be sure I will," replied Madame Cardiac, laughing lightly, for none knew about the fears better than she.

Nancy took her hand as they went up the passage. She lighted the candle at the slab, and they went into the salon. Madame Cardiac sat down for a few minutes, by way of reassuring her. Nancy took off her bonnet and mantle. On the table was a small tray with the tea-things upon it. Flore had left it there in readiness, not quite certain whether her mistress would come in to tea or not.

"I had such a curious dream last night," began Nancy; "those tea-things put me in mind of it. Lavinia——"

"For goodness' sake don't begin upon dreams to-night!" interposed Madame Cardiac. "You know they always frighten you."

"Oh, but this was a pleasant dream, Mary. I thought that I and

avinia were seated at a little table, with two tea-cups between us ıll of tea. The cups were very pretty ; pale amber with gilt scrolls, ıd the china so thin as to be transparent. I can see them now. nd Lavinia said something which made me smile ; but I don't :member what it was. Ah, Mary ! if she were only back again ith us ! "

"She is better off, you know," said Mary Cardiac in tender ones.

"All the same, it was a cruel fate that took her ; I shall never ink otherwise. I wish I knew what it was she died of ! Flore ld me one day that M. Podevin quite laughed at the idea of its eing a chill."

"Well, Nancy, it was you who stopped it, you know."

"Stopped what ? " asked Nancy.

"The investigation the doctors would have made after death. Both f them were much put out at your forbidding it : for their own satis- ıction they wished to ascertain particulars. I may tell you now that thought you were wrong to interfere."

"It was Captain Fennel," said Nancy calmly.

"Captain Fennel ! " echoed Mary Cardiac. "M. Dupuis told me ıat Captain Fennel wished for it as much as he and M. Podevin."

Captain Fennel's wife shook her head. "They asked him about before they left, after she died. He came to me, and I said, Oh, et them do what they would ; it could not hurt her now she was dead. was in such terrible distress, Mary, that I hardly knew or cared hat I said. Then Edwin drew so dreadful a picture of what post- ıortems are, and how barbarously her poor neck and arms would be ut and slashed, that I grew sick and frightened."

"And so you stopped it—by reason of the picture he drew ? "

"Yes. I came running downstairs here to M. Dupuis — M. odevin had gone—for Edwin said it must be my decision, not his, nd his name had better not be mentioned ; and I begged and prayed I. Dupuis not to hold it. I think I startled him, good old man. was almost out of my mind, quite wild with agitation ; and he romised me it should be as I wished. That's how it all was, Mary."

Mary Cardiac's face wore a curious look. Then she rallied, peaking even lightly.

"Well, well ; it could not have brought her back to life ; and I epeat that we must remember she is better off. And now, Nancy, want you to show me the pretty purse that Miss Perry has knitted or you, if you have it at hand."

Nancy rose, opened her work-box which stood on the side table, nd brought forth the purse. Of course Madame Cardiac's motive had een to change her thoughts. After admiring the purse and talking f other pleasant matters, Mary took her departure.

And the moment the outer door had closed upon her that feeling f terror seized upon Nancy. Catching up her mantle with one

hand and the candle with the other, she made for the staircase, leaving her bonnet and gloves in the salon. The staircase struck cold to her and she could hear the wind whistling, for it was a windy night. As to the candle, it seemed to burn with a pale flame and not give half its usual light.

In her nervous agitation, just as she gained the uppermost stair, she dropped her mantle. Raising her head from stooping to pick it up, she suddenly saw some figure before her at the end of the passage. It stood beyond the door of her own room, close to that which had been her sister's.

It was Lavinia. She appeared to be habited in the silver-grey silk already spoken of. Her gaze was fixed upon Nancy, with the same imploring aspect of appeal, as if she wanted something; her pale face was inexpressibly mournful. With a terrible cry, Nancy tore into her own room, the mantle trailing after her. She shut the door and bolted it, and buried her face in the counterpane in wild agony.

And in that moment a revelation came to Ann Fennel. It was this apparition which had been wont to haunt her husband in the house and terrify him beyond control. Not a thief; not Flore—but Lavinia!

III.

On the Monday morning Flore found her mistress in so sick and suffering and strange a state, that she sent for Madame Cardiac. In vain Mary Cardiac, after hearing Nancy's tale, strove to convince her that what she saw was fancy, the effect of diseased nerves. Nancy was more obstinate than a mule.

"What I saw was Lavinia," she shivered. "Lavinia's apparition. No good to tell me it was not; I have seen it now twice. It was as clear and evident to me, both times, as ever she herself was in life. That's what Edwin used to see; I know it now; and he became unable to bear the house. I seem to read it all as in a book, Mary. He got his brother to send for him, and he is staying away because he dreads to come back again. But you know I cannot stay here alone now."

Madame Cardiac wrote off at once to Captain Fennel, Nancy supplying the address. She told him that his wife was ill; in a nervous state; fancying she saw Lavinia in the house. Such a report, she added, should if possible be kept from spreading to the town, and therefore she must advise him to return without delay.

The letter brought back Captain Fennel, Flore having meanwhile remained entirely at the petite Maison Rouge. Perhaps the Captain did not in secret like that little remark of its being well to keep it from the public; he may have considered it suggestive, coming from Mary Cardiac. He believed she read him pretty correctly,

and he hated her accordingly. Any way, he deemed it well to be on the spot. Left to herself, there was no telling what ridiculous things Nancy might be saying or fancying.

Edwin Fennel did not return alone. His brother's wife was with him. Mrs. James, they called her, James being the brother's christian name. Mrs. James was not a lady in herself or in manner; but she was lively and very good-natured, and these qualities were what the little Maison Rouge wanted in it just now; and perhaps that was Captain Fennel's motive in bringing her. Nancy was delighted. She almost forgot her fears and fancies. Flore was agreeable also, for she was now at liberty to return to ordinary arrangements. Thus there was a lull in the storm. They walked out with Mrs. James on the pier and took her to see the different points of interest in the town; they even gave a little soirée for her, and in return were invited to other houses.

One day, when the two ladies were gossiping together, Nancy, in the openness of her heart, related to Mrs. James the particulars of Lavinia's unexpected and rather mysterious death, and of her appearing in the house again after it. Captain Fennel disturbed them in the midst of the story. His wife was taking his name in vain at the moment of his entrance, saying how scared *he* had been at the apparition.

"Hold your peace, you foolish woman!" he thundered, looking as if he meant to strike her. "Don't trouble Mrs. James's head with such miserable rubbish as that."

Mrs. James did not appear to mind it. She burst into a hearty laugh. She never had seen a ghost, she said, and was sure she never should; there were no such things. But she should like to hear all about poor Miss Preen's death.

"There was nothing else to hear," the Captain growled. "She caught a chill on the Sunday, coming out of the hot church after morning service. It struck inwardly, bringing on inflammation, which the medical men could not subdue."

"But you know, Edwin, the church never is hot, and you know the doctors decided it was not a chill. M. Podevin especially denied it," dissented Nancy, who possessed about as much insight as a goose, and a little less tact.

"Then what did she die of?" questioned Mrs. James. "Was she poisoned?"

"Oh, how can you suggest so dreadful a thing!" shrieked Nancy. "Poisoned! Who would be so wicked as to poison Lavinia? Everyone loved her."

Which again amused the listening lady. "You have a quick imagination, Mrs. Edwin," she laughed. "I was thinking of mushrooms."

"And I of tinned meats, and copper saucepans," supplemented Captain Fennel. "However, there could be no suspicion even of

that sort in Lavinia's case, since she had touched nothing but what we all partook of. She died of inflammation, Mrs. James."

"Little doubt of it," acquiesced Mrs. James. "A friend of mine went, not yet twelve months ago, to a funeral at Brompton Cemetery; the ground was damp, and she caught a chill. In four days she was dead."

"Women have no business at funerals," growled Edwin Fennel. "Why should they parade their grief abroad? You see nothing of the kind in France."

"In truth I think you are not far wrong," said Mrs. James. "It is a fashion which has sprung up of late. A few years ago it was as much unknown with us as it is with the French."

"*They* will be catching it up next, I suppose," retorted the Captain, as if the thing were a personal grievance to him.

"Little doubt of it," laughed Mrs. James.

After staying at Sainteville for a month, Mrs. James Fennel took her departure for London. Captain Fennel proposed to escort her over; but his wife went into so wild a state at the mere mention of it, that he had to give it up.

"I dare not stay in the house by myself, Edwin," she shuddered. "I should go to the Vice-Consul and to other influential people here, and tell them of my misery—that I am afraid of seeing Lavinia."

And Captain Fennel believed she would be capable of doing it. So he remained with her.

That the spectre of the dead-and-gone Lavinia did at times appear to them, or else their fancies conjured up the vision, was all too certain. Three times during the visit of Mrs. James the Captain had been betrayed into one of his fits of terror: no need to ask what had caused it. After her departure the same thing took place. Nancy had not again seen anything, but she knew he had.

"We shall not be able to stay in the house, Edwin," his wife said to him one evening when they were sitting in the salon at dusk after Flore's departure; nothing having led up to the remark.

"I fancy we should be as well out of it," replied he.

"Oh, Edwin, let us go! If we can! There will be all the rent to pay up first."

"All the what?" said he.

"The rent," repeated Nancy; "up to the end of the term we took it for. About three years longer, I think, Edwin. That would be sixty pounds."

"And where do you suppose the sixty pounds would come from?"

"I don't know. There's the impediment, you see," remarked Nancy, blankly. "We cannot leave without paying up."

"Unless we make a moonlight flitting of it, my dear."

"That I never will," she rejoined, with a firmness he could not mistake. "You are but jesting, Edwin."

"It would be no jesting matter to pay up that claim, and others; for there are others. Our better plan, Nancy, will be to go off by the London boat some night, and not let anyone know where we are until I can come back to pay. You may see it is the only thing to be done, and you must bring your mind to it."

"Never by me," said Nancy, strong in her innate rectitude. "As to hiding ourselves anywhere, that can never be; I should not conceal my address from Mary Cardiac. I *could* not conceal it from Colonel Selby."

Captain Fennel ground his teeth. "Suppose I say that this shall be, that we will go, and order you to obey me? What then?"

"No, Edwin, I could not. I should go in to M. Gustave Sauvage, and say to him 'We were thinking of running away, but I cannot do it; please put me in prison until I can pay the debt.' And then——"

"Are you an idiot?" asked Captain Fennel, staring at her.

"And then, when I was in prison," went on Nancy, "I should write to tell all to William Selby; and perhaps he would come over and release me. Please don't talk in this kind of way again, Edwin. I should keep my word."

Mr. Edwin Fennel could not have felt more astounded had his wife then and there turned into a dromedary before his eyes. She had hitherto been tractable as a child. But he had never tried her in a thing that touched her honour, and he saw that the card which he had intended to play was lost.

Captain Fennel played another. He went away himself.

Making the best he could of the house and its haunted state (though day by day saw him looking more and more like a walking skeleton) throughout the greater part of June, for the summer had come in, he despatched his wife to Pontipette one market day—Saturday—to remain there until the following Wednesday. Old Mrs. Hardy had gone to the homely but comfortable hotel at Pontipette for a change, and she wrote to invite Nancy to stay a short time with her. Charles Palliser was in England. Captain Fennel proceeded to London by that same Saturday night's boat, armed with a letter from his wife to Colonel Selby, requesting the Colonel to pay over to her husband her quarterly instalment instead of sending it to herself. Captain Fennel had bidden her do this; and Nancy, of strict probity in regard to other people's money, could not resist signing over her own.

"But you will be sure to bring it all back, won't you, Edwin; and to be here by Wednesday, the day I return?" she said to him.

"Why, of course I shall, my dear."

"It will be a double portion now—thirty-five pounds."

"And a good thing, too; we shall want it," he returned.

"Indeed, yes; there's such a heap of things owing for," concluded Nancy.

Thus the Captain went over to England in great glee, carrying with him the order for the money. But he was reckoning without his host.

Upon presenting himself at the bank in the City on Monday morning, he found Colonel Selby absent; not expected to return before the end of that week, or the beginning of the next. This was a check for Captain Fennel. He quite glared at the gentleman who thus informed him, Mr. West, who sat in the Colonel's room, and was his locum tenens for the time being.

"Business is transacted all the same, I conclude?" said he, snappishly.

"Why, certainly," replied Mr. West, marvelling at the absurdity of the question. "What can I do for you?"

Captain Fennel produced his wife's letter, requesting that her quarter's money should be paid over to him, and handed in her receipt for the same. Mr. West read them both, the letter twice, and then looked direct through his silver-rimmed spectacles at the applicant.

"I cannot do this," said he; "it is a private matter of Colonel Selby's."

"It is not more private than any other payment you may have to make," retorted Captain Fennel.

"Pardon me, it is. This really does not concern the bank at all. I cannot pay it without Colonel Selby's authority: he has neither given it nor mentioned it to me. Another thing: the payment, as I gather from the wording of Mrs. Ann Fennel's letter, is not yet due. Upon that score, apart from any other, I should decline to pay it."

"It will be due in two or three days. Colonel Selby would not object to forestall the time by that short period."

"That would, of course, be for the Colonel's own consideration."

"I particularly wish to receive the money this morning."

Mr. West shook his head in answer. "If you will leave Mrs. Fennel's letter and receipt in my charge, sir, I will place them before the Colonel as soon as he returns. That is all I can do. Or perhaps you would prefer to retain the latter," he added, handing back the receipt over the desk.

"Business men are the very devil to stick at straws," muttered Captain Fennel under his breath. He saw it was no use trying to move the one before him; and went out, saying he would call in a day or two.

Now it happened that Colonel Selby, who was only staying at Brighton for a rest, for he had been very unwell of late, took a run up to town that same Monday morning to see his medical attendant. His visit paid, he went on to the bank, surprising Mr. West there about one o'clock. After some conference upon business matters, Mr. West spoke of Captain Fennel's visit, and handed over the letter he had left.

Colonel Selby drew in his lips as he read it. He did not like

Mr. Edwin Fennel; and he would most assuredly not pay Ann Fennel's money to him. He returned the letter to Mr. West.

"Should the man come here again, West, tell him, as you did this morning, that he can see me on my return—which will probably be on this day week," said the Colonel. "No need to say I have been up here to-day."

And on the following day, Tuesday, Colonel Selby, being then at Brighton, drew out a cheque for the quarter almost due and sent it by post to Nancy at Sainteville.

Thus checkmated in regard to the money, Captain Fennel did not return home at the time he promised, even if he had any intention of doing so. When Nancy returned to Sainteville on the Wednesday from Pontipette, he was not there. The first thing she saw waiting for her on the table was Colonel Selby's letter containing the cheque for five-and-thirty pounds.

"How glad I am it has come to me so soon!" cried Nancy; "I can pay the bills now. I suppose William Selby thinks it would not be legal to pay it to Edwin."

The week went on. Each time a boat came in, Nancy was promenading the port, expecting to see her husband land from it. On the Sunday morning Nancy received a letter from him, in which he told her he was waiting to see Colonel Selby, to get the money paid to him. Nancy wrote back hastily, saying it had been received by herself, and that she had paid it nearly all away in settling the bills. She begged him to come back by the next boat. Flore was staying in the house altogether, but at an inconvenience.

On the Monday evening Mrs. Fennel had another desperate fright. She went to take tea with an elderly lady and her daughter, Mrs. and Miss Lambert, bidding Flore to come for her at half-past nine o'clock. Half-past nine came, but no Flore; ten o'clock came, and then Mrs. Fennel set off alone, supposing Flore had misunderstood her and would be found waiting for her at home. The moon-lit streets were crowded with promenaders returning from their summer evening walk upon the pier.

Nancy rang the bell; but it was not answered. She had her latch-key in her pocket, but preferred to be admitted, and she rang again. No one came. "Flore must have dropped asleep in the kitchen," she petulantly thought, and drew out her key.

"Flore!" she called out, pushing the door back. "Flore, where are you?"

Flore apparently was nowhere, very much to the dismay of Mrs. Fennel. She would have to go in alone, all down the dark passage, and wake her up. Leaving the door wide open, she advanced in the dark with cautious steps, the old terror full upon her.

The kitchen was dark also, so far as fire or candlelight went, but a glimmer of moonlight shone in at the window. "Are you not here, Flore?" shivered Nancy. But there was no response.

Groping for the match-box on the mantel-shelf over the sto and not at once finding it, Nancy suddenly took up an impressi that someone was standing in the misty rays of the moon. Gazi attentively it seemed to assume the shadowy form of Lavinia. An with a shuddering cry, Nancy Fennel fell down upon the bri floor of the kitchen.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

A RECEIPT FOR A KISS.

TAKE two pure souls as fresh as buds in May,
Two faces—one as fair as summer's flower;
A little modest maidenly delay,
But not enough to make your kiss turn sour.

Two pulpy pair of lips, two clinging hands,
Two pairs of eyes that see each other only:
Set them to simmer on the sad sea-sands,
In an old wood, or any place that's lonely.

Add wholesome breeze-stirs gently, fresh inspired
Moan of mad music, mixed with starry night;
And, if the very richest kiss should be required,
Sprinkle it with the moon's soft-sifted light.

A cleaving friend, a blanched and bitter aunt,
A clever child—but not too much of this—
A pinch of "won't," a very little "sha'n't"
Will give a piquant flavour to your kiss.

But still scum off refusals as they rise,
Throw in from time to time your buttered reason;
Garnish with sugared whispers, vows or sighs,
And serve. This dish is seldom out of season!

Pleasing the present, as it pleased the past,
A zest to life's great feast in every clime;
Tender and luscious, it is like to last
In public favour till the end of time!

"ECCO ROMA!"

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.

Arch of Titus.

We left Naples one bright and sunny morning. The drive from the Grand Hotel on the Chiaja to the railway station was interminable. It seemed to take one from one end of the town to the other. Yet it did not quite do that, for Naples extends a distance of nearly five miles; whilst if you take in its uninterrupted line of suburbs, you have a chain of houses and streets I know not how many times five miles multiplied.

The life and bustle of Naples were never more conspicuous than to-day. The streets were crowded. It was a great religious day, and the people were more or less en fête, in gala costumes. The women wore all their best jewelry, the men all their gay clothing. Hired carriages were in demand, and rushed and tore about the streets and across squares at their usual break-neck speed. In many cases they contained more than their full complement of passengers, and, generally speaking, these were in high spirits. The churches were open; and every now and then an acolyte would suddenly issue from the interior and ring a peal at a small bell hung within the chief porch: such a bell and such a peal as one might ring any day for admittance to an ancient courtyard, but more prolonged. This over, the acolyte, with his little black cassock and

white surplice, would steal a longing look out upon the gay world, the passing throng, and then disappear again within the church, there to go on with his monotonous duties, and no doubt long for the hour of release and liberty.

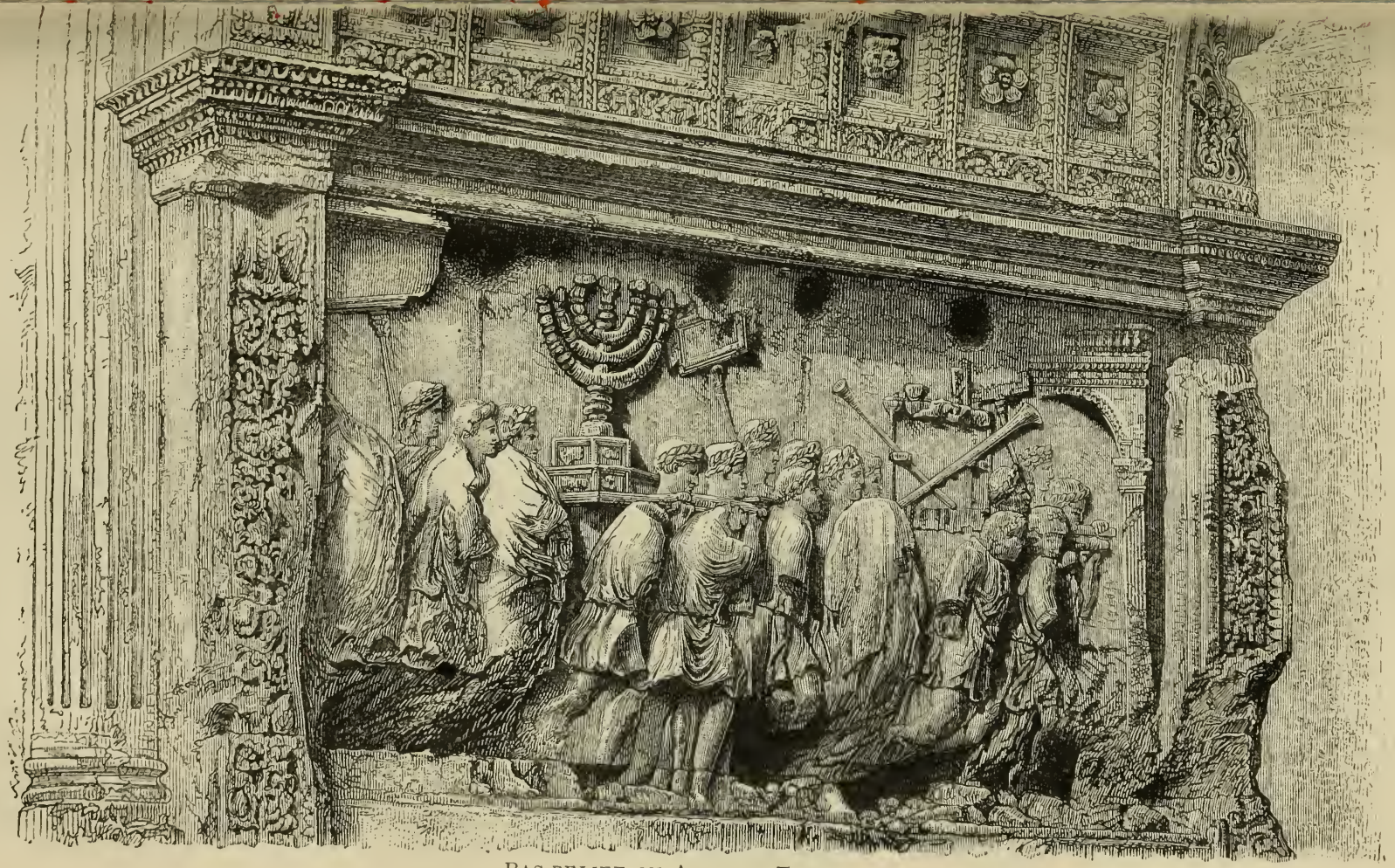
Our own driver was not one whit behind others in the speed at which he travelled: and our worst rolling in the Bay of Biscay was not to be compared with the pitching and tossing we met with that day in the streets of Naples. The fact of its being a religious day mattered not to him, and did nothing to arrest the flow of strong language that fell from his lips as he every now and then overturned an old woman's fruit stall or took off the fifth wheel of a coach. That he was himself the aggressor was all the more reason why he should indulge in his talent for abuse and the fine flow of words with which nature had gifted him. It was as clear as daylight that if the ruined fruit stall or the wrecked carriage had not been in his way, he could not have done the damage: hence, he was naturally the aggrieved. Of course you may put anything in any light you please, and by logic prove that the sun moves round the earth, and the earth is square. There is a great deal of this sort of logic in the Neapolitans. Nor is it confined to them. Do we not all occasionally and satisfactorily prove to our own minds that black is white? Whether the conscience becomes equally convinced is another matter.

I believe they had told the driver at the hotel that he would have hard work to catch the train, as we were behind time. Whether this was a misapprehension on their part, or merely a desire that before leaving we should see of what a Neapolitan driver was capable (as if we had not already had abundant evidence of his powers!), I know not; but on arriving at the station, we proved to have won in the race with Time: we had half-an-hour to spare.

But finally we had left Naples—this Queen of the Mediterranean just as Venice is Queen of the Adriatic—behind us; had bidden it a long and reluctant farewell. Again we passed through the vineyards and the hills; through places that were paradises, and inhabited by people that ought to have been angels without wings but were probably too often very much the opposite. When we reached our destination, and the magic words "Roma! Roma!" went ringing down the platform, night and darkness had long fallen.

It was impossible for us to see that a first view of Rome is disappointing: that as you enter it, and find ordinary squares and modern thoroughfares, your impression of years, everything that you had pictured to yourself seems suddenly to dissolve and disappear like the baseless fabric of a vision. But it is only to be restored strengthened and confirmed by-and-by, when you have grown to know and see Rome in all her beauty and refinement of ruin and recollection, legend and tradition.

To ourselves it was not a first view of the Eternal City, and we knew exactly what to expect. We were not going there for new



BAS-RELIEF ON ARCH OF TITUS.

impressions, but to confirm old ones. And yet it is certain that, however often you may visit the Eternal City, new impressions will certainly spring up to delight and astonish you. Rome is like a rare book or a great painter's masterpiece—ever fresh, fair, and inexhaustible.

You approach Rome with sensations scarcely to be awakened by any other city in the universe. The very word has a magic in it no other syllable possesses. These four letters seem to comprise a great portion of the world itself, even as they include a great extent of its history. England, it is said, is greater than ever Rome was in her palmiest days; but the History of England, read in the far-off ages, will never awaken in the same degree as the History of Rome the thrill of emotion, of admiration for the magnificent, the great and the sublime. There will be few records such as those we read of concerning the Romans, for ever "marching onwards" conquering and to conquer, subduing the whole civilised world; leaving behind them unfading traces of their power and strength as a nation, and numberless individual instances of their extraordinary force of character, their wonderful genius.

One of the grandest and most interesting records of English history is that of the Reformation, because upon this turning point her greatness was in many ways to stand or fall. But all this was after all very straightforward sailing, unmarked by any of the thrilling incidents which distinguish the History of Rome. The image of Constantine the Great on the world's canvas is a far more interesting, sublime and devout figure than that of good old Henry VIII. We had fallen upon different times. The Romance of History was over. The days of Rome's greatness might be called the Iron Age, those of England's the Golden Age: and as marks cut into iron, stamped and indelible for ever, were the deeds of Rome and the Romans.

The History of Rome takes part in everything that is most interesting in the world's records. Sacred and Secular traditions contend with each other for prominence and pre-eminence. In the Bible she is as distinct a feature as in General History. She has given her name to a form of religion which has made thousands of martyrs, and has at times caused blood to flow in public thoroughfares like water. She has had a greater superstitious hold upon the more refined portion of civilisation than any other form of worship ever laid down in any Rubric. She has vied and competed with the reformed Protestant creed, and sometimes has almost seemed to triumph. She has certainly had more grasp upon the minds of her votaries. But whilst in the one case the ruling motive has been fear and superstition, in the other it has been the gentle influence of the Still Small Voice; the creed not of forms and ceremonies and broad phylacteries, but the heart's devotion in the retirement of the closet: the secret service which brings forth its result in the fruit of everyday life: to receive its reward in that day when the last trumpet shall summon the quick and dead to judgment.

Even in Pagan Rome there is a greatness we almost look for in vain elsewhere. In a few broad outlines we have the picture of a race which, however rash, headstrong and barbarous, commands our highest admiration. Their records are no mere traces written upon the sea-shore, but in the words of Job, deeds graven with a pen of iron in the rock for ever.

In all that is lovely she was equally conspicuous. The women of Rome were as beautiful as those of Greece and Egypt, and it is the love and cultivation of the beautiful which begets perfection of form and feature in successive generations. In art they were equally distinguished. Their school of architecture has never been surpassed in the simplicity of its broad outlines and the durability of its constructions. Its sculpture yields the palm only to the Greek: and if the Greek surpasses it in delicacy and refinement, that of Rome is more marked by strength and manliness of tone and character. The Romans accomplished their best work before the wave of luxury and voluptuousness had swept over them with a force which undermined the foundations of their glory: but in Greece, her records and her work, there is ever that evidence of excessive refinement, which, however beautiful in itself, captivating the eye and ensnaring the mind, is only too likely in course of time to lead to effeminacy and decay.

In music, too, she was great, though in a rugged, somewhat barbarous way. But her people were fond of it, and sought it. We read of Nero playing upon the lyre whilst Rome was burning: we know that with him music was a passion and a cultivated art; that his ear was perfect and his voice one of the finest in the world; that when he sang and acted, he carried his audience by storm, not by virtue of being Emperor, but by force of genius. What can be more pathetic than his last hours, when, having sung his swan song, and flying before his enemies, he placed the dagger to his throat and so died? Who does not see here the possibilities, not only of a great, but of a good character, had he only been true to his higher nature? In reading the history of kings and nations, nothing is more impressive than these records of successive individuals; nothing more strongly emphasises the flight of time and the shortness of life. Nowhere is it more vividly given than in the short and oft-repeated records of Scripture: the choice of the two paths running side by side. And So-and-so did *evil* in the sight of the Lord. And again: So-and-so did *good* in the sight of the Lord—and they slept with their fathers. The lives seem to pass with lightning rapidity; as a flower of the field: as a tale that is told.

Certainly the Romans were not of nations who pass away and leave no sign. Like the Moors, where they touched, there they were bound to record everlasting traces of their power. But the history of the Romans has occupied the pen and attention of the whole world; it has been more than exhausted; whilst the history and character of the Moors have scarcely received justice; their greatness is not

understood and appreciated; their singular refinement, without effeminacy, has not been sufficiently realised.

Many marks of her greatness Rome has, indeed, left behind her, and a visit to the famous city is an epoch in one's life. It is an event we look forward to from the days when we first plunged into Roman history; and the visit once paid leaves a series of impressions upon the mind which are photographed there for ever.

I have said that no other city, no other name, thrills us with the same emotion. If this is true before we see and know Rome, how much more so is it after we have become familiar with its monuments, instinct with the life and atmosphere of the past. Here we are face to face with ancient Rome, although Rome of to-day is doing her best to rob many of her monuments of the charm of their antiquity. On the other hand much may be seen to-day that could not have been seen even a quarter of a century ago; such for instance as the excavations on the Palatine Hill, which are amongst the most interesting in the Eternal City.

Mrs. Jameson said that there were only two things in the world which had not disappointed her: St. Peter's at Rome, and the sea. The latter is incontestible. The greater the mind's conception of the sublime, the truer will be the appreciation of the boundless ocean. But there are monuments in Rome far more impressive, far more awe-inspiring, than St. Peter's. He who has gazed upon the Forum, or looked upon the vast extent of the Coliseum, or trod the Appian way, or mused upon the romantic tomb of Cecilia Metella, has gone through thoughts and emotions St. Peter's could never inspire.

It is well that Rome has internal attractions and evidences of her ancient greatness, for she owes little to beauty of situation. The City of Seven Hills has only their flowing outlines to redeem the monotony of the plain, to which the slow-flowing Tiber scarcely seems to add any beauty. The seven hills have nothing of loftiness and grandeur about them, and without the aid of a guide they are even difficult to define.

In the old days, before railways were invented, people, of course, had to post in travelling. Those were the days for knowing a country intimately; for revelling in out-of-the-way nooks and corners; for discovering people in all their freshness of character, with primitive unspoiled minds; for ever fresh surprises and delights as you passed rapidly along the road, exhilarated by the speed of your four horses, and the buoyant spirits of your postilion; the surprise and delight awakened by the beauties of nature; pictures succeeding each other as rapidly as they do in a gallery, as, ever on the move, hills and valleys constantly changed shape and outline, and a new composition was for ever being formed. The plains ever varied, and the rivers like silver threads twisted and twined about, gleaming in the sunshine, and adding their beauty to the landscape; a beauty which has been compared to poetry in woman. Whilst all about

BRIDGE OF FABRICIUS.

you, on the right hand and on the left, were small Edens where people lived out their happy lives; the longest life containing nothing but short and simple annals; the great world so far off, so difficult to reach, so shadowy in its influence and existence.

Not in those days could it be said, as we so often say now: "The world is small!" It must have seemed illimitable, vague and shadowy to the greater portion of mankind. It was not then as it is now, when we are for ever running up against someone who knows everyone that we know, who turns out to be the bosom friend of our own especial chum and crony, or even proves to be a connection by marriage or forty-fifth cousin by ties of blood.

In those days, when the traveller was posting through Italy, the postilion, on reaching a height from which the whole famous city lay spread before you, would stop his panting horses and proudly exclaim "*Ecco Roma!*"

This was the true way of approaching Rome. The Eternal City lay mapped before you. The dome of St. Peter's at once arrested the eye. The seven hills uprose with their gentle undulations, their undefined boundaries. Instead of seven hills they might be seventy. All around stretched the lowly Campagna, the sad and desolated plain which has never recovered its lost glory. The Tiber, with its curious white waters, flowing like a silver streak on its way to the sea twenty miles away, beyond those distant hills. The Apennines bound the horizon, Soracte rising majestically above them. And the Tiber, nearing the sea, seems to hurry its course, as if impatient to yield up its lesser life to the greater.

"Ecco Roma!"

They are words the traveller must have longed to hear. They must have rung in his ears from childhood upwards. They were the fulfilling of a long-cherished dream; for history repeats itself, and mankind is the same from generation to generation. Have we not all dreamed this dream, and cherished it as one of life's missions? As the centuries roll on, and another Tibni dies, and another Omri reigns to the third and fourth generation—even to the thirtieth and fortieth—human nature differs in details, in manner and ways of living; man changes the form of his dress, the hour of his banquet, but in essentials he remains the same. If Diogenes were here now, he would probably still be looking for an honest man; his habitation and the manner of his search would be changed: nothing else.

"Ecco Roma!"

Well has Byron called her the Niobe of nations. From no other spot of earth can you gaze upon a scene so pregnant with historical remains and reminiscences: such wreck and ruin. The whole Campagna stretched out before you was once teeming with life and movement. The conquerors of the world made it their home. All the greatness of their resources here found its culminating point; here wealth and grandeur were lavished. Giant buildings were

erected in one generation, only, as it seemed, to be demolished by the next. Here the Cæsars made for themselves an everlasting name; hence they marched with their armies, the laurel crown of victory twined in advance about their brows. The plains would shake with the tramp of horsemen; a living fire seemed in movement as the sun flashed upon shield and helmets; a moving mass swayed to and fro like the heaving of a sea; a distant murmur was heard passing through their ranks like the surging of waters: the excitement of victory seen in advance. And certain as the advancing tide and relentless as the hungry ocean, would be the effect of their deeds. For Rome was once nothing but the name of a town. For ages her history seemed to be confined to the surrounding Campagna: as if the far off hills bounding her horizon also fixed the limits of her ambition. It took five centuries for Rome to become Italy; or rather for Italy to become Rome and subject to her: so that all Italians became Romans. It was then only that her ambition seemed to spring into life, and she became in a comparatively short time mistress of the whole civilised world.

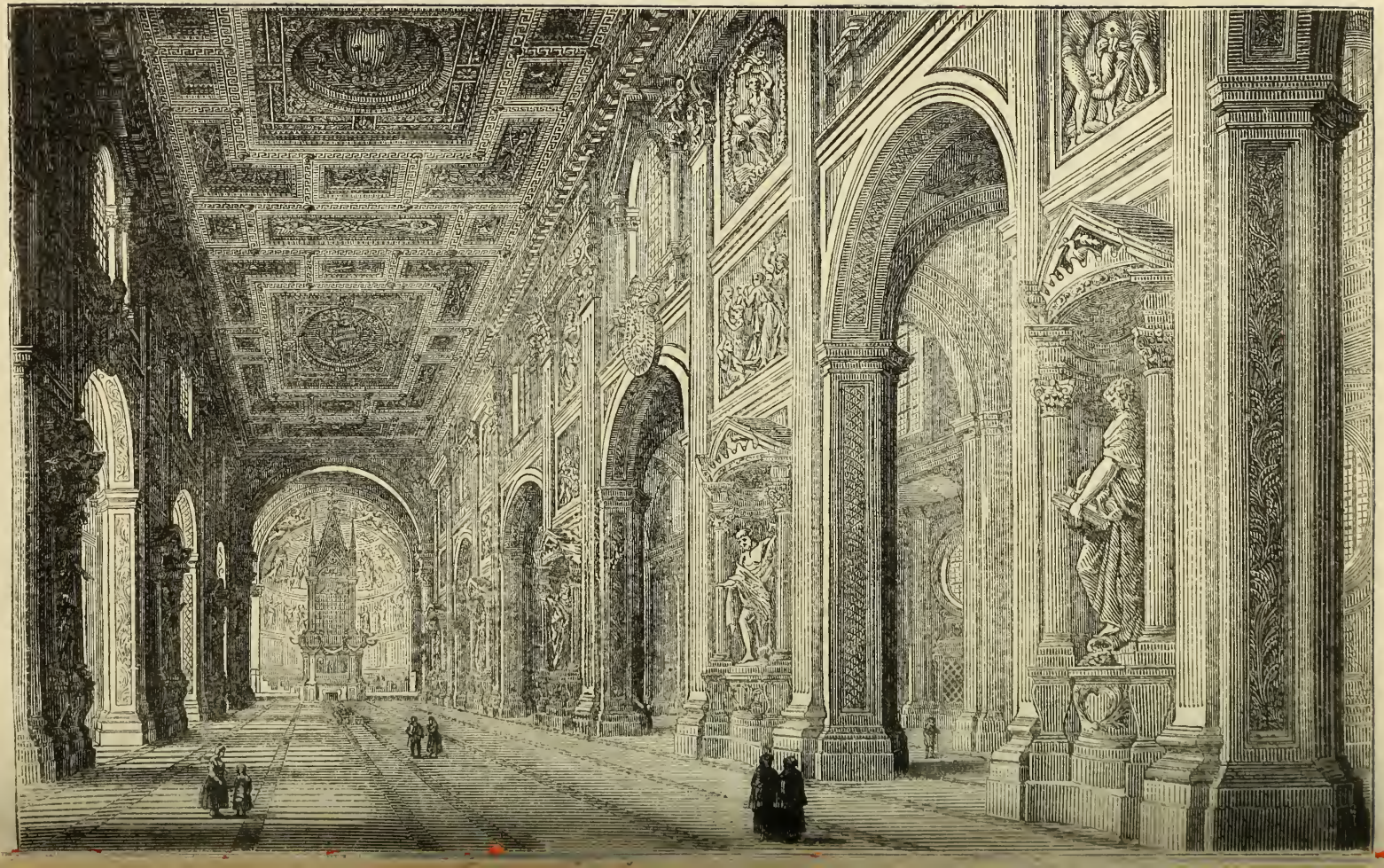
"ECCO ROMA!"

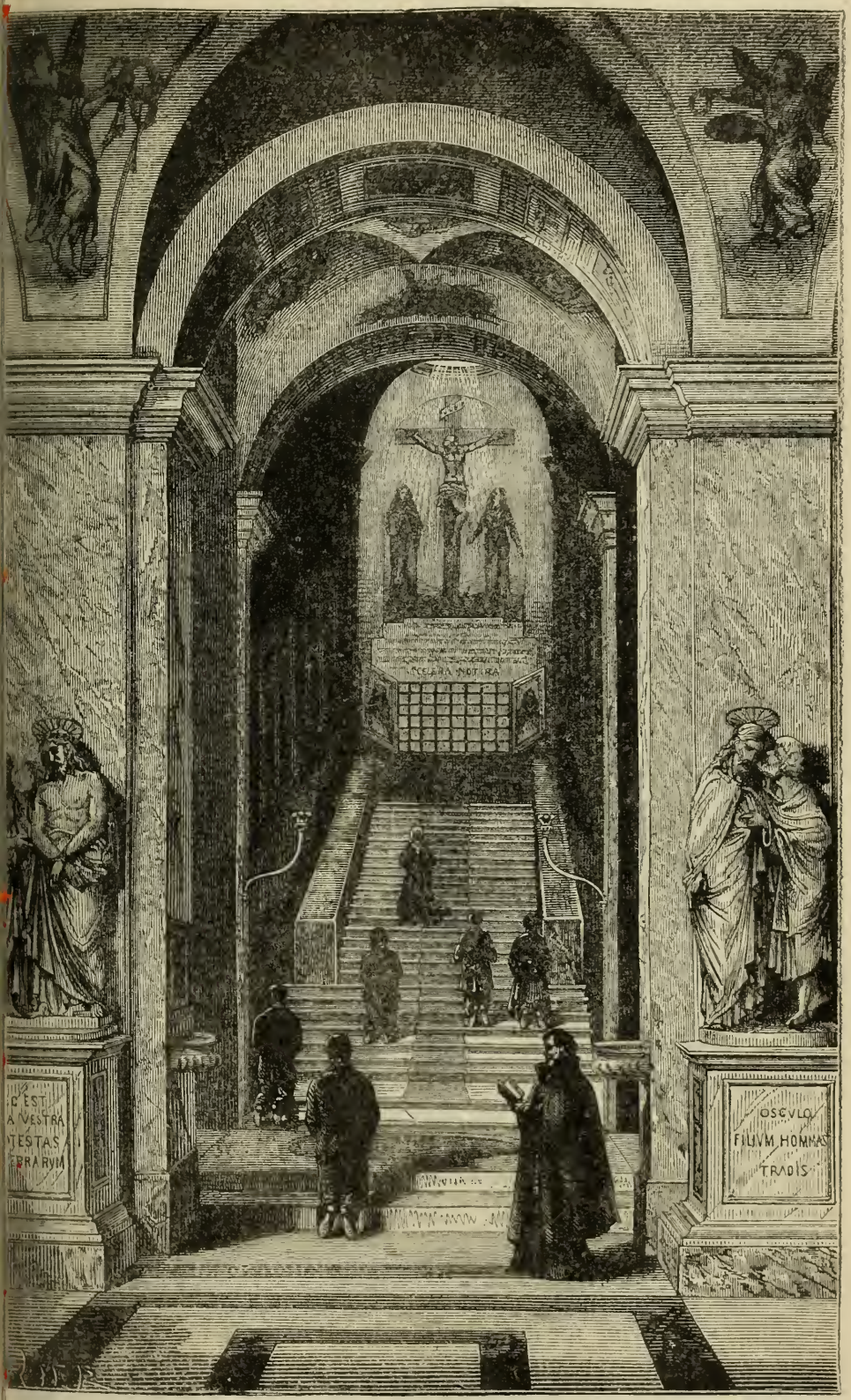
As the postilion pronounced the words, the eye of the traveller would unconsciously seek the famous and cruel Tiber, and another picture would rise before his mental vision. The picture of a time when it, too, was teeming with life; was crowded with shipping, with banners waving, with small boats darting from shore to vessel, filled with warlike Romans. It was the scene of splendid and courtly pageants, and wealth and luxury dwelt upon its surface. Nowhere does the decay of Rome seem more marked than here, as we watch the slow moving stream, which appears to flow to the rhythm of the sad word Ichabod! and in imagination fall back upon the scenes of its ancient glory.

The Romans of that day represented the Tiber as a bearded man crowned with laurel, holding a Cornucopia, and supported by the wolf and Romulus and Remus. But instead of bringing abundance to Rome, she has with persistent cruelty overflowed her banks from time to time, and worked misery and devastation. Sometimes for days the whole city has been under water, so that it has been said nothing was visible but the tops of the hills. Another Deluge, without the consoling symbols of the dove and the olive branch and the arc in the sky. And from the days of Rome's greatness until now, she has baffled all attempts to keep her within bounds.

"*Ecco Roma!*"

As the postilion exclaimed the words, every species of emotion would fill the traveller's breast; a crowd of recollections rise up in his mind; he would beg for time to contemplate the wonderful panorama; to take in all the ghostly visions that passed in array before his imagination. A moment for exquisite silence and thought: thought which expresses itself in feeling rather than in words. And





SCALA SANTA. LATERAN PALACE.

then, once more in movement, and galloping rapidly down th incline, through the Porta del Popolo the traveller would pass int the streets of the Eternal City.

And I suppose, as the sunshine draws the shower, he would b drawn towards St. Peter's, and his thoughts would steer for th celebrated Piazza with its wonderful Colonnades and plashin fountains, the finest and most beautiful in Rome, and its famou Obelisk, brought from Heliopolis by Caligula, and removed from th Circus of Nero three hundred years ago to its present position.

We many of us know the thrilling story from our boyhood. Ho the Obelisk was removed in 1586, by Sixtus V., and the ceremon was preceded by high mass in St. Peter's. How the Pope forbid tha a word should be spoken during the raising of the monument, and anyone broke the silence the penalty was to be death. How, whe slowly rising it suddenly ceased to move, the ropes began to giv way and the Obelisk was in great jeopardy. How during that terrifi moment a sailor named Bresca shouted aloud: "Acqua alle funi! And how, in obedience, the ropes were wetted and the Obelisk wen upward and stood firmly on its base. Then the Pope, grantin himself the indulgence of breaking his word, spared the man's life and rewarded him by promising that his native village should for eve after furnish St. Peter's with the Easter palms. Let us hope that more personal and substantial recognition also followed.

It is some years now since I first saw the Piazza San Pietro. know not whether it was because the wind was in the east and ble mightily—and the east wind is as unpleasant in Rome as elsewhere or that I was more seriously out of health than I had yet been: o that in long desire and vivid mental colouring I had imagined to much: but at a first glance I was disappointed. The Obelisk wa there with all its traditions and vicissitudes; but the fountains, a fate would have it, were not playing that day. The colonnade stretched round their loving arms in perpetual embrace; but th shadows cast by their beautiful columns— of which there are near three hundred—were faint and chilling. The sky was clouded an the sun shone not. The front of St. Peter's looked mean and poo and ugly, for the exterior of the giant temple is nothing. Most of is concealed by surrounding buildings, and what is seen is no impressive. Only that grand dome rising skywards, challenges you admiration, though from its beauty of form and proportion it appear smaller than it is.

The long flight of shallow steps, after all one has heard and read are also disappointing. It is only when you have reached th summit and stand for a moment with your back to the Church, tha you realise the grandeur and magnificence of the Piazza.

But its true greatness could only have been estimated at Easte when, thronged with thousands of kneeling worshippers—a livin mass so great that it insensibly reminded one of that description i

e Apocalypse: "A countless multitude whom no man could num-
r"—the Pope came forth and, from the balcony above the Great
ntrance, blessed the people. No ceremony of recent years has
en more thrilling, more impressive than this; perhaps from its very
sence of gorgeous pageantry and ceremonial. Simply a multitude
bowed heads, and above them an old man with outstretched arms,
e supreme head of his Church, pronouncing an almost inaudible
nediction.

The scene was instinct with life and colouring. The throng was
mposed of men and women, monks and laymen, nuns and their
ore worldly sisters, pilgrims and peasants. Eager crowds swarmed
e colonnades and mounted the Obelisk. In the balcony the Pope
white, seated on a golden chair, waited for the hour to strike,
pported by two immense peacock fans in the background. The
yonets of the soldiers gleamed and flashed in the sunlight. But
oad sunshine or torrents of rain, the crowd was equally vast and
verential. The benediction over, the cannon boomed forth, bells
ng, and indulgences floated down upon the multitude, to be cap-
red only by the happy few. With the downfall of the temporal
wer of the Pope everything was changed; and the Easter cere-
nies—which made Rome a rallying point for so many people of
nations and creeds during the Easter week—were brought to an
d, perhaps for ever.

But having gazed sufficiently upon the piazza and Bernini's colon-
des, the plashing fountains making a refreshing music if the day
hot and sunny, and Bresca's famous Obelisk—let us call it so
d contribute our mite to immortalising the good fellow—having
ne this, you raise the heavy leather curtain at the lesser doorway,
d stand within the mightiest temple in the world.

It is so large that it requires many visits to realise its extent. Per-
ps only when you come back to St. Paul's in London, and find
t apparently it has suddenly shrunk into nothing, do you suffi-
ntly conceive of the vastness and grandeur of St. Peter's.

It stands upon the site of the first church, built in the year 90,
Anacletus, Bishop of Rome, whom St. Peter himself is said to
ve ordained. Next, Constantine, at the beginning of the fourth
ntury, erected a Basilica. This word means King's House; but
e Christians in the time of Constantine adopted it for their
ces of worship. The basilica of Constantine's suffered very much
the hands of the Saracens in the ninth century, and was all but
stroyed in the fifteenth century. Nothing now remains of that
cient basilica but the crypt.

In 1506, under Julius XI., the present St. Peter's was commenced.
had many architects, of whom Brumante was the first, Raphael
e second, Michael Angelo one of the last, until it was finally
mpleted by Giacomo della Porta in 1590. The expense was
ormous; the main building alone costing over £10,000,000.

It would be impossible to attempt here a description of St. Peter's. It is one of those mighty monuments which must be seen. On a first acquaintance with it, you are surprised by its apparent smallness. But presently you become amazed at its real dimensions; and you wonder if it be possible that it was ever raised by the hand of man. It is in the form of a Greek cross, of which you can only see a small portion at a time. The utmost you can take in at one glance is its length from east to west. Gazing eastward, far down you see the magnificent Baldacchino, glittering with its gilded ornaments. Still beyond it, at the far end, you see people moving to and fro. It is little to say that their footsteps are lost; they themselves seem to be nothing but shadows stealthily moving hither and thither. About the pillars are immense colossal statues, and half way down on the right is the famous statue of St. Peter, whose great toe has been worn away by the kisses of devout pilgrims bestowed upon it. He holds the keys of the Church—or of Heaven—in his right hand, and has looked down benignly upon the devoted heads of succeeding generations. On great festival days the statue is dressed up in vestments and a mitre, and the people hasten to do homage to a figure that now looks ridiculous.

In richness of decoration St. Peter's cannot be surpassed. Gorgeous mosaics, magnificent paintings, a wealth of gold and colouring meet the eye at every turn. The walls are decorated with colossal angels flying in purple and crimson vestments, holding up to the admiration of the world portraits of dead-and-gone Popes. The altars seem countless, and each, blazing with gold and mosaic and gems, appears worth a country's ransom. The chapels are numerous, and are separately large enough for churches. It is this colossal scale upon which everything is constructed that prevents you from realising for some time the true size of St. Peter's.

There is fortunately a certain subdued light about it, which tones down the gorgeousness of much of the decoration; which even necessitates this vivid colouring and gilding. How cold and lifeless our own St. Paul's appears for want of it. It needs decoration; it was Sir Christopher Wren's intention that it should have it; and it seems strange that our own metropolitan cathedral should be left comparatively neglected and unadorned: and that the one recent step in the right direction should have been unfortunately carried out, and given rise to unhappy controversy and dissension.

There is no mistake of this sort in St. Peter's. It is a great Roman Catholic Church, and its design is carried out to perfection. A great deal of the decoration is in very bad taste, but this is counterbalanced by the vastness of the building, and the splendour of its effect, and the subdued light which is thrown upon all.

Nevertheless, of all the criticisms that have been passed upon this mighty triumph, I most agree with Fredrica Bremer. She falls into no raptures and rhapsodies, whilst admitting the grandeur and

ON THE PINCIAN HILL.

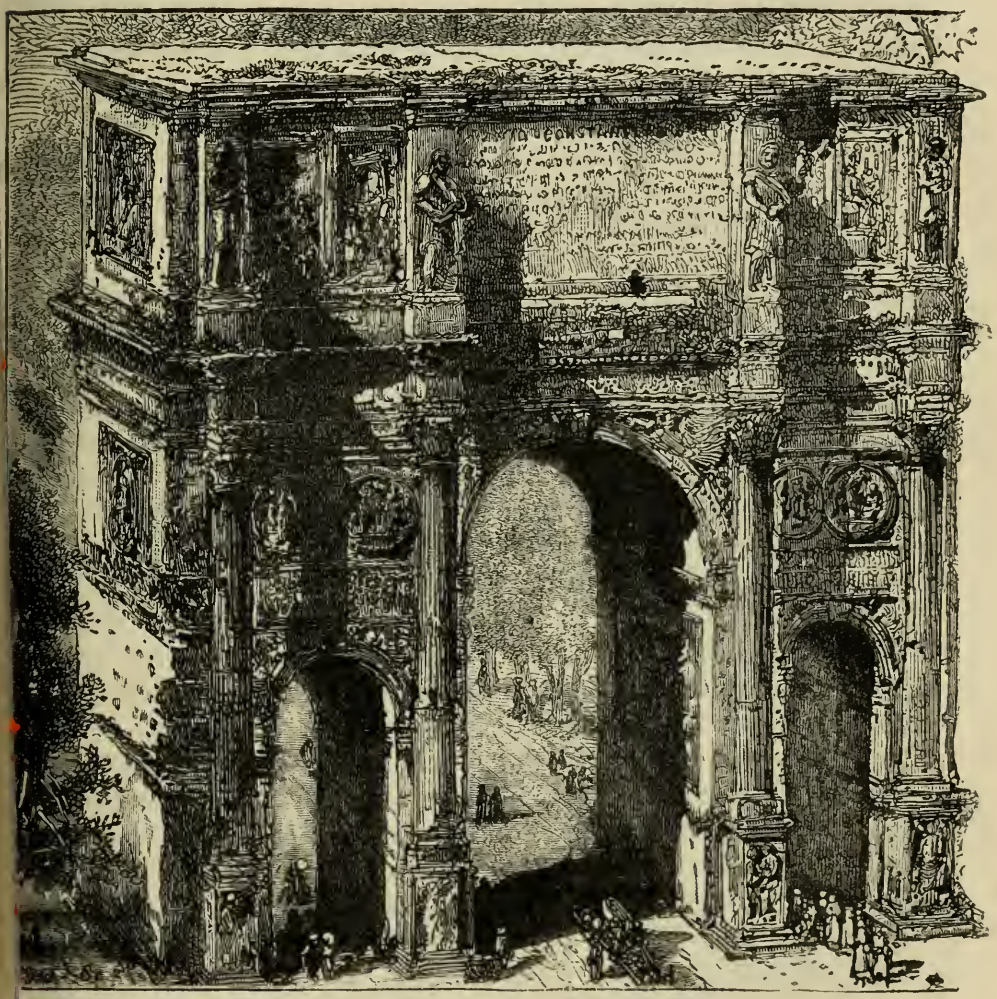
magnificence of the building, but says that it produces upon her rather the effect of a Christian pantheon than a Christian church. So have I ever felt towards St. Paul's in London, and so did I feel towards St. Peter's at Rome. The beauty and refinement of Gothic architecture is so adapted to the spirit and influence of religious worship that the mind once accustomed to these outlines refuses to be satisfied with any other. One feels, for instance, as if it must have required a more sublime, more devotional frame of mind to raise Westminster Abbey than to erect St. Paul's.

But the dome of St. Peter's, resting upon its four colossal pillars, is above all praise. The spectator pauses beneath it and looks upwards in silence, lost in boundless admiration. The summit seems too distant for the eye to reach. And beyond this there is yet another cupola. In design and proportions the cupola seems to have attained perfection. Even the decoration, with all its gilding, seems chaste, subdued and beautiful.

On a great festival it must be a rare and wonderful sight to witness this mighty building thronged with worshippers; to see afar off the venerable form of the Pope dressed in gorgeous robes performing High Mass and turning, with uplifted arms, in silent benediction upon his people. It must be a moment full of awe and emotion when the great organ crashes out in all its power, and volumes of sound and waves of melody go echoing and re-echoing, pulsing and surging through fretted vaults and archways, finding a thousand repetitions in each chapel and nook and corner of the glorious building. It might be almost sufficient to make vain man proud of his little brief authority; cause him to fancy himself only a little lower than the angels in might and majesty. If Brumante returned for a moment from the unseen on such an occasion, or Raphael, or Michael Angelo, or Giacomo della Porta, they might almost be forgiven for indulging in that pride which is registered as one of the seven deadly sins. Only that true greatness and genius is never proud, but humble and modest, and gifted with a reverence for the power which it possesses yet knows to be something beside itself.

And when all is over, imagine the multitude streaming forth back to its ordinary life, of the world, worldly; how many the better, the more fervent in spirit, the more sanctified for the service they have attended and the blessing received? And then the last worshipper gone, the great doors are closed, and the great church, the solemn aisles, are left to silence and solitude and repose. And ghosts come forth, and a shadowy form at the organ once more sends forth the pealing anthem, and now the thunder of diapasons reverberates through the aisles, and now the soft sweet music of the reeds whispers and floats in the unseen, and waves of melody fill the air; and almost it seems as if a still small voice from heaven were seeking a heart charged with the cares and sorrows of life to encourage it with hope and consolation.

But we must not linger any longer in St. Peter's. Our space draws to a close. That day, passing out from the church, we turned to the Piazzo S. Giovanni and the Church and Palace of Lateran. In the fourth century Constantine conferred the house upon the Bishops of Rome, to be henceforth their episcopal residence, and then consecrated the Basilica. It was looked upon as the first of the Christian Churches, and bears an inscription which



ARCH OF CONSTANTINE.

ranks it as the Mother Church of the City, the Head of all the churches in the world. Its chapter takes precedence of St. Peter's, and until the year 1870 the Popes were crowned here, not in St. Peter's. Even now, the ceremony of taking possession of the Basilica is one of the first to be observed when the Pope is elected.

A few moments will take you from the Church to the Palace, where you may gaze upon the Holy Staircase, which is preserved as one of the treasures, one of the most sacred and precious relics of Rome. For a thousand years this palace was the residence of the Popes. The

staircase is said to have been that of Pilate's house, and was trodden by our Saviour when he was brought before Pilate. The removal of the staircase from Jerusalem to Rome is attributed to the mother of Constantine, in the fourth century. At the foot of the staircase are two sculptures by Giacometti, the "Ecce Homo" and "The Betrayal by Judas." At the head of the staircase is a sculpture of the Crucifixion.

This staircase has been the goal of pilgrims and devotees for ages. Here they do penance for their sins, and are accorded absolution, and go on their way rejoicing. The Scala Santa is never ascended by ordinary folk, but a staircase on either side leads to the Holy Chapel, upon which you may not gaze except through the bars of an iron grating. The Pope alone officiates at its altar; none but the clergy are allowed at any time to enter, and they only once a year, when they assemble, with torches, in solemn procession for worship.

Some time after we had left the Lateran with all its ancient and sacred associations, we passed through the Forum, and gazed once more for a moment at the Arch of Titus, erected to commemorate the conquest of Jerusalem. It was called the Arch of the Seven Lamps, was built over in the Middle Ages, and restored in the time of Pius VII. The accompanying illustration represents the victors carrying away the spoils from the Temple of Jerusalem, including the silver trumpets and the golden candlestick. The sacred objects were placed by Vespasian in the Temple of Peace.

A still more striking arch is that of Constantine, with its three archways and fluted Corinthian columns, its statues of the Dacian captives, its magnificent reliefs, and its beautiful medallions representing the sports of the chase.

Yet later, going out by the Porta del Popolo—by which so many travellers have first entered Rome—we presently passed through the entrance of the Villa Borghese, and once more lost ourselves in the beauty of its gardens. They are some of the rarest and loveliest in the world. Art and nature seemed to have vied with each other in bringing forth perfection. You can scarcely imagine that anything so wild and secluded can exist so near to the gates of the Eternal City. There are groves of cypress trees for ever pointing upwards to the matchless sky, and the beautiful ilex waves its branches, and whispers and murmurs as its leaves are rustled by the passing breeze. At the entrance of the wood the plashing fountains seem to fill all the garden with grace, all the air with music. Wild flowers are abundant, rich and perfumed; lawns are green and velvety. Marble nymphs and fauns hide themselves in the woods, stained by the hand of time, and serving to render the solitude only more profound by their occasional presence. You may catch glimpses of distant Rome through the waving trees, and this seems the very spot in which to muse on her past grandeur. But, alas! you are seldom alone here;

the gardens are open to all. And you selfishly long to close the gates and dismiss the intruders, and pass the hours in silence and solitude; in dreamy and delicious reverie; haunted by the spirit of Michael Angelo, who trod these fair grounds and woods; summoning up all the ghosts and traditions, the past scenes of pomp and pageantry and martial glory, the imperial luxury and the Papal magnificence of dead-and-gone Rome.

Finally, at sunset, when the shadows had lengthened, we mounted the Pincian Hill, which is one of the favourite resorts of the Romans of to-day. Here you have not the beauty and expanse, and the solitude and freedom of the Borghese Gardens, but it is at all times a picturesque scene; it was especially so as we saw it in the waning light. Below flowed the Tiber, which not very far off is spanned by the ancient and beautiful bridge of Fabricius, with its splendid arches. From the height of the Pincio the dome of St. Peter's was clearly marked against the background of the fading sky: the whole outline of the building might be traced. On the banks of the river the Castle of St. Angelo stood out boldly, crowned by the figure of the Archangel ever raising its cross heavenwards. Rome seemed to lie at our feet, shrouded in the melancholy of lengthening shadows and dying light. Far away, across the flat and dreary Campagna, beyond Ostia and the hills, a thin line of sea seemed to flash and melt in the distance, and reflect the lowering sunshine.

"It is cloudland," said Mauleverer, after a long outward gaze.

"It is sea," I returned. "That peculiar light and shimmer belong to the sea alone."

"It is the story of the chameleon over again," laughed Mauleverer presently; "we are both right, both wrong. It is both sea and sky; but at this distance you cannot separate the one from the other. How lovely it all is."

"You mean the romance of it," I said, of malice prepense, for he professes to despise romance.

"Et tu, Brute!" laughed Mauleverer. "I mean the historical association of the place. The influence this spot has had upon the world's course; the grand part she has played amongst nations; all the facts, not the fancies, which mark her footsteps on the sands of time. I tell you that we should leave romance to dreamers and poets, and I am neither the one nor the other."

"L'un n'empêche pas l'autre," I quoted. "Some of the greatest men of the world, her greatest generals, her chief scientists, have also been the greatest lovers of romance. The two may go hand in hand, and happy they who possess the power of losing themselves in the realms of imagination when the prosy side of life is a little too much for them."

The shades of evening were falling upon the town. A few ecclesiastics were pacing beside the walls with bowed head and meditative step. For them the romance of life was over, if ever they had

possessed it at all. What were they thinking of as they paced so soberly? Was it happy episodes in their own past existence? Or the sad shadow of the tomb that already seemed to rest upon their grey hairs and drooping forms? Or were they living over again in imagination the days of Rome's glory; lamenting, it may be, the more recent downfall of their own by the loss of the temporal power. A fountain near plashed musically, and the gentle breeze wafted its spray. A girl in Roman costume passed on her way with a basket of fruit upon her head, one of those picturesque objects only to be found in sunny southern lands.

And the river flowed on with its voice of centuries; weighty with past histories, laden with secrets, the receptacle of unknown treasures, the faithful listener to unnumbered confessions. Upon its surface was reflected the darkening canopy of the sky—the sky of Rome; the clearest, most ethereal, most beautiful of all skies. I know not why it is so, but so it is. In other parts of Italy, from north to south, from east to west, the skies are ever clear and lovely, but the skies of Rome exceed them all. The eye cannot be satisfied with gazing. It is almost as if heaven had pity upon her downfall, her lost glory; and by clothing her with this celestial canopy, fair and peaceful above all other, would whisper anew to her those bygone words of hope and consolation: "I WILL REMEMBER THY TRANSGRESSIONS NO MORE."

FROM THE FRENCH OF VICTOR HUGO.

Look you, my sweet! we must accept sad days;
Love is like morning dew
That glitters with a thousand fervid rays
Of dazzling hue:
No brighter thing beneath the eternal sky
Than this small water drop: but come not nigh!
Gaze not too near!
It shines from far a diamond—close by
'Tis but a tear!

C. E. M.

FAIR DAFFODILS.

A WIDE, far-reaching level of green meadow. A soft, grey, unbroken March sky, palely reflected in a slow, unrippling tream that winds its languid way between two straggling rows of ollard willows. Away to the west a range of tall poplars breaks the isty horizon line. That is all, absolutely all, except the daffodils.

The foreground is studded with sturdy sheaves of dark green lades, out of which spring nodding golden heads. Now and then omes an idle, spiteful little gust of wind from nowhere in particular. he poplars shiver; the willows turn the ashy grey of their leaves to ; a cold wave of light passes over the longer grass; but the daffodils oss their yellow bells gladsomely, and make a sunshine of their own n the chill face of the earth.

In the angle of two rough stone walls an artist has planted him- lf and his canvas face to face with the daffodils, the dull green nd and the dull grey sky and stream.

Away to his right, on the far side of the river, stands a picturesque luster of ivy-clad cottages with quaint chimney-stacks and delight- me masses of red roofs and timbered walls.

Nearer still is the bridge over which he has come, wide and egular, with massive piers and a span wholly disproportioned to the zy little thread of water beneath.

The walls behind him are part of a noteworthy pile; the last frag- ents of a feudal castle, ending its days peacefully as a farm-house, ith one sturdy tower still habitable, and an embattled archway, with aces of portcullis and drawbridge, through which Farmer arrable's herd of handsome Alderneys and shorthorns pass meekly their sheds in the castle tilt-yard. Here was material to hand for y artist, but for that very reason not for Spencer Welby.

Spencer Welby has painted only three pictures that anyone has ard of, but they are very much heard of indeed just now. They e all clever, all uncomfortable, and all very unlike what the majority artists would care to paint at all.

Spencer Welby, in the days when he sat under the grey March sky inting the daffodils was at the height of his popularity. His was a ll-known figure in every society gathering. A pale young man, se-shaven and wearing a pince-nez, with a tendency to stoutness ich caused him much disquietude.

He affected a hushed, impressive manner and spoke softly. His ess was the furthest possible remove from artistic picturesqueness; was precise and correct to the minutest detail. He was of the wn towny, and studied to produce that effect. How hard he

worked at his art nobody but Fred Blount knew. The general public were encouraged to regard him as a gilded youth, a society darling, who now and then with his fat white hands carelessly gave form to the ideas that floated around him, rising as spontaneously and with as little effort as the smoke from his cigarettes. Fred knew better. But no opinion of his friend's work could ever be extracted from him. "There are some things he can do, and some things he can't," was his only criticism to anyone but the artist himself.

It was about a week after Spencer Welby first set up his easel in the angle of the old fortress walls, over which the brown branches of the orchard trees were beginning timidly to hang out their tiny green signals of coming summer, that he wrote an urgent invitation to Blount to come down and join him. Blount accepted it without much enthusiasm. He was a dreamy, happy-go-lucky fellow, who had watched all his own little ventures in art and literature perish miserably before he settled down to content and a clerkship, resigned to be nobody in particular for the rest of his days as far as society was concerned, except as being Spencer Welby's friend.

He arrived early one afternoon, and spreading his rug beside Welby's camp-stool, gave himself over to the study of the scene before him. He did not particularly admire it, so he held his peace, watching Welby getting in, cleverly enough, the cold shiver passing over the nearest willow.

"How does it strike you?" the inevitable question came at last.

"Oh, good. Uncommonly good," was the equally inevitable response. "March—every gust of it. Gives me toothache if I look too long. Aren't you going to get some sunshine into it?"

"Yes; the sunshine of the daffodils. Can you not see it shimmering on that low-lying ground and growing stronger here and there—the cold rare sunshine of spring and youth? Here is its focus, on her golden hair."

"Oh—h—h, I see," with a long-drawn tone of comprehension. "A woman? She's your daffodil? An armful of yellow flowers, I suppose—yellow hair—that sort of thing?"

Spencer Welby nodded profoundly.

"What's she to be doing?"

"She must stand in the sunshine, her hair and white dress lightly wind-blown—her face, young, unconscious, expectant. She must be a country blossom."

"Milkmaids don't wear white frocks, any more than daffodils," Fred grumbled sotto voce.

"Sturdy yet graceful, full of life and colour, yet finely, 'musically made.'"

"You'll have to get her made to order, then. That sort isn't kept in stock. Miss Kibble's the nearest thing."

"Bah! The wrong yellow. A chalk-white London model!"

"Can't your friends at the Manor House help us?"

"No. Miss Jernyngham is lovely, but trained, refined, conventional; out of sympathy with out-of-door life."

"Then we'd better begin to look about. I presume, as usual, I am to have the honour——"

Welby gave a start and dropped his brush. Fred stopped short. There was a cracking of dry twigs behind them, and some mortar rattled down from a gap in the old wall.

"That's a short cut to the farm," grumbled Welby. "Marrable promised to stop it up while I was here. The farm-lads come and gape over it at me now and then. Have you looked at those other things?"

Two other canvases were leaning against the wall. Fred proceeded to examine them in silence. Both were transcripts of the same scene from the same point of view. One had evidently been painted at the close of one of the rare, hot, bright days that seem to come astray out of summer into early spring. The other was an early dawn after a night of storm. The river was in flood, swirling madly round the roots of the old pollard willow and spreading itself out over the low meadows farther on. The daffodils lay in crushed masses, storm-beaten out of all their fresh and joyous loveliness, their golden heads prone on the sodden earth.

Fred meditated on them for a space. "What are you going to do with these?"

"Send them to the Grosvenor."

"What, all three?"

"All or none. It is her story. Cannot you read it?"

"I suppose I shall presently. The story of the Daffodil. Why must it come to a bad end?"

"Because—because—I imagine the truth is because I want to paint that last picture. I did it last year when the waters were out. It demands the intermediate one."

"I see. Hot sunshine out of season. Very bad for both flowers and girl. Daffodils limp and over-blown. And the girl? You get her in here, do you? Ah, yes, leaning against the willow. There are initials—a true-lover's knot cut in the bark."

"Her face turned to the sunset glow," rhapsodised Welby. "Suffused, transformed, overwhelmed in its red rapture."

"Red rapture—that's very pretty. And the last?"

Welby with his brush indicated beneath the froth and whirling waters a tangle of golden hair and the outline of a white face amid the willow roots.

"She wouldn't have drowned herself here, you know," objected Fred. "She'd have gone to the pool lower down; or the gravel-pit."

Then he stopped short again, as they heard a girl's voice singing in the field beyond the brook, and presently she stepped into sight, her milking-stool under her arm, lilting gay as a lark a plaintive ditty.

She wore a dingy old cloak that might have been green in its original colour; and her face was concealed by a Zulu hat crushed down on her head; but her figure was lithe and upright, and from beneath the old hat a mass of coiled golden hair of the brightest, goldenest yellow fell low on her neck and caught the eyes of the two men in a flash.

"Daffodil!" they both exclaimed.

She crossed the stream by a rough plank thrown from bank to bank and came towards them singing, making for the blocked up orchard path. She was close upon them before she noticed her way was stopped. She threw back her head and gazed in surprise; gaped, one might have said of anyone less lovely. She regarded the two men with the steady serious gaze of a child, or a cow looking over a hedge. Fred, scrambling half-way to his feet, returned it with interest, checking himself in a vigorous ejaculation, while Welby again murmured "Daffodil!" in tones of solemn rapture.

The next minute the beautiful, brilliant countenance was eclipsed by the envious hat-brim, and she was trudging steadily away by the regular path.

"What is she doing here? The Marrables' milkmaid? Pooh!" cried Fred. And the next minute he was struggling over the gap and crushing the pale, shivering early primroses beneath his feet as he strode through the dead leaves of the orchard.

The farm-house kitchen was a great octagon room in the base of the tower. A stone stair ran up one side leading to the battlements. A loop-hole slit had been enlarged to a reasonable-sized window, under which stood Mrs. Marrable's ironing-table with a pile of newly-sprinkled linen. Through an arched doorway could be seen the castle-yard, with its draw-well in the middle, and beyond the ruined chapel, now a barn, with a tiled roof and trusses of straw peeping through its beautiful rose-window.

When Fred peeped in, the place was empty; only a sound of voices and a clatter of cans came from somewhere beyond. He waited; then taking a long circuit entered the castle yard by the cow-sheds. Just within the doorway of the first he caught a glimpse of a pink cotton frock and found a girl in a Zulu hat crouched down beside a gentle Alderney. She was nowise disconcerted by his standing and gazing his fill at her, but went on composedly tinkling the milk into her pail till she had finished.

"May I—will you give me a drink of warm milk?" he asked.

She rose deliberately, turned her sleeves down over her round white arms and picked up her pail.

"Muster Marrable!" she called, and walked off majestically across the yard to the castle dungeon, now the dairy.

Mr. Marrable gave him what he wanted. He found it very nasty, but it afforded an excuse for sitting on the bench outside the kitchen door on chance of "Daffodil's" reappearance. Presently the thump-

ing of an iron on the board and the clicking of the iron-stand showed that Mrs. Marrable had got to work again within.

"I'm not going to have it, Marrable, and I give you warning. I said she was a saucy, stuck-up hussy from the first. She'd never have come here with my good-will. Learn her butter-making indeed! Not I. And she don't come here to milk again after what I see with my own eyes just now. If your shirts wasn't just nicely damped down and my irons hot, I'd put on my bonnet and go off to Martha Bacon direct, I would!"

Marrable's reply came to Fred in the form of a distant grumble.

"What did I see? I see her looking over her shoulder as bold as brass at him, and he a-follering of her. That's all. I'll up and do my duty by her to-morrow if she shows her face here, see if I don't." Mrs. Marrable's iron came thumping down on Marrable's Sunday shirt-front with a bang that was at once a discourse and a warning, and Fred leaving his tumbler on the bench meanly stole off unobserved.

He was not much surprised on regaining Welby's place to find it empty, and to make out, far away across the meadow two figures: a girl in a green cloak and a gentleman in a light suit carrying a milking-stool.

Welby re-appeared triumphant.

"It's settled! She has promised to come whenever I want her. I am to leave a note in the cleft of the old willow. Is she not perfect? The face, the look I might have searched the world for! Bella Kibble indeed!"

"Did she say who she is and what she is doing here?"

"She lives in one of those cottages over there, and goes to help at the farm, as the dairymaid has sprained her wrist. She has made me promise to keep the whole thing a secret, and not to recognise her if we meet in the village. Some jealous lout of a lover, I suppose. Of course I promised."

"Of course you did. What's her name?"

"I almost forgot to ask till the last moment. 'Bacon, 'Liza Bacon.' I don't think she wanted me to know. Now help me, will you, to put up these things. I don't feel like doing another stroke of work to-day."

They were engaged to dine at the Manor House that evening.

"The Manor House" and "the Jernynghams" had figured prominently in Welby's letters and conversation of late, and Fred was curious to see them. He found much what he expected, the regular old English country house, containing the regular old English county family. A genial, hospitable, fine old True Blue Tory papa, a dignified, blonde daughter, with an exquisite complexion and tepid manners, and a lively young Mrs. Jernyngham, the second wife.

She was a pretty, kittenish little creature, with big innocent eyes, soft caressing ways and a sharp tongue. Blount took her in to dinner, Welby the daughter, whose manner rose at least one degree higher

in temperature in consequence. Mrs. Jernyngham's bright eyes rested on the pair with an odd little look of satisfaction once or twice, Blount noticed.

"We must drive you over to Trefford Hold some day, Mr. Blount. Such a pity the Treffords never come there. They like their Norfolk place better. The Earl is an old friend of Mr. Welby's, you know."

Blount *didn't* know, but answered: "Very likely. The Welbys—or is it the Spencers—are an old Norfolk family."

"I used to know them as a youngster," Welby interposed, overhearing them; "but had not seen Lord Trefford for years till the day we met at the Cattle Show, and he introduced me to Mr. Jernyngham. My father was their nearest neighbour, and people in the country see a good deal of one another."

"How is it you never seem to meet them in town?"

"Ah, dear Mrs. Jernyngham, town is vast, and we poor workers find time limited. We must take the companions we find at hand. Besides, I don't fancy you would care for the Trefford set."

Miss Jernyngham remarked frigidly: "Lord Trefford's interests in life begin and end with prize cattle, and Lady Trefford's with missionary meetings."

"I saw the daughter once last season—Lady Pamela—and thought her strikingly beautiful," Blount was beginning.

"Not beautiful enough to take me out of my way to see her again," murmured Welby in a tone that crushed poor Lady Pamela's pretensions to good looks on the spot.

"Your friend is the 'fortunate youth' of the old fairy tales," Mrs. Jernyngham whispered as she rose from the table. "Talent, wealth, social position and good family. Shall we give him the princess?"

"You need not ask my permission," laughed Blount, hurrying to open the door.

Walking home through the sharp March moonlight, Blount made an odd, inconsequent speech, as he lit his cigarette.

"Don't you think we had better drop 'the daffodil,' Welby? At least, till you have made all safe up there; for fear of accidents?"

But Welby, with the privileged surliness of genius, declared that he knew what he was about, thank you.

The morning rose still and misty, with bursts of fitful sunshine strengthening into a hot noon.

Punctual to the time appointed came Miss 'Liza Bacon, tripping across the plank bridge, a white skirt showing below the green cloak.

She nodded friendlily to both, and demanded what she was to do in the most prompt and business-like fashion.

Welby displayed his pictures and expounded his views, at which she gaped and said, "Lawks!" then tossed off hat and cloak and stood smiling radiantly at them, the very incarnation of youth and spring. Fred's scruples melted under her smile like morning hoar.

"This way," he cried. "Allow me to show you. Can you stand so? Will it tire you? Look here, Welby."

They both stood and admired. She wore a thick, heavy white gown, simply girded in at the waist, not in the least like the "best white frock" which Welby had been secretly dreading, and round her shoulders had loosely knotted a great, soft kerchief of Indian silk, a paler shade of the yellow of her hair. Then she pulled and twisted the heavy, rippling masses of her golden locks, setting free a soft glory of curling ends that danced in the breeze on her white forehead. Then she took the sheaf of daffodils that Welby had gathered on her arm, poised herself lightly on one foot, with a delicious, airy, vigorous grace, and smiled triumphantly at the astonished pair.

"Is this what you want? Make haste; I can't keep it up for long."

"Perfect, perfect!" shouted Fred, while Welby dashed at his brushes and palette.

Fred stood looking at him impatiently for a few minutes.

"It won't do, you know," he said at last. "Here, let me come."

Welby got up and resigned his brush with alacrity.

"Why? Does he do your painting for you?" inquired the model, relaxing her pose for an instant while the exchange was being made.

"H'm, not exactly; but you see there is a great deal that I must do myself in arranging the details of a picture. Picture-making is not all painting, as you will learn some day, if ever you take up art. The spirit, the idea, the *soul* of the picture is something which cannot be put in with the brush alone."

Daffodil gaped again. Her mind was evidently becoming rapidly expanded.

"For example. How am I to make you look as I intend you to look? *My* Daffodil is listening to the music of the spring—the prophetic murmurs of coming summer—the voices of the stream—the song of the sky-lark."

"I don't hear any coming summer," said Daffodil. "Nor yet a sky-lark. Perhaps," shyly, "if you was to sing yourself, sir ——"

"I?" Welby hesitated.

"Yes; try it," cried Fred. "That's the way to get what you want; the music into her face, eh? Sing that little thing of Tosti's."

Spencer Welby "dropped into music" casually, as the immortal Silas Wegg did into poetry, and possessed a pretty tenor voice, which was much admired. He looked keenly from one face to the other, but seeing nothing but the most respectful earnestness in both, yielded to the request.

A stout young gentleman in a check suit, standing on a hillock in a breezy plain, warbling in a high tenor of death and passion, may or may not be a good substitute for a sky-lark, but it was a successful one in this instance. 'Liza threw her head slightly back; a rapt ex-

pression came into her lovely eyes. "Go on!" she breathed, when the song was ended; "Go on!"

Spencer Welby sang on, and Blount painted, till the brief sunshine waned, and Daffodil picked up her hat and cloak and bid them good-bye.

Welby stood uncertain for a minute, then walked away beside her, leaving Fred to collect and carry home the things, which he did with sufficiently bad grace at first, but ended by settling down to work at the picture while the light lasted and Daffodil's face was fresh in his memory.

It was late before Welby returned. He vouchsafed no explanation of his proceedings, but threw himself on the sofa and smoked in silence, watching the airy curls of vapour with a complacent smile. He spoke at last.

"Did you mark her face while I sang? It was like playing on some finely-strung instrument."

"You mean Miss Bacon? Have you been singing to her all this time? What are you up to? Trying to get the 'red rapture' into her face, eh? How far do you mean to go?"

Welby shivered, then smiled ineffably.

"You speak coarsely and foolishly. What wrong does the warm sunshine do the bud when his tender gaze tempts the hard, immature petals to expand, and draws the perfume from the rose-red heart?"

Fred grunted. "That means you are humbugging her by way of completing her education. Well, I suppose we must have her again for the second chapter of the story."

The promised expedition to Trefford Hold came off next day. Spencer Welby rode with Mr. and Miss Jernyngham, while for Fred was reserved the honour of driving in Mrs. Jernyngham's victoria. The little lady was very gracious, but there grew upon Fred an uneasy sensation of some hidden purpose under her bright looks and pretty little speeches, and before long he arrived at it.

"So that is settled!" she exclaimed, with a nod in the direction of the riders ahead. "Dear Eda! How happy she will be. Of course I love her as if she were my own child, but it will be an enormous satisfaction to see her safe in a home of her own."

"You mean they are engaged? Has Mr. Jernyngham given his consent?"

"Not yet. But he will. It rests with you."

"With me? What can I have to do with it?"

"You can make or mar your friend's prospects just as you choose. And you know it!" smiling mysteriously.

"I don't understand you," said Fred in trepidation; then piqued by her smile, he went on impetuously: "If Mr. Jernyngham asks me any questions, I suppose I am bound to answer them honestly?"

"And spoil the whole thing rather than hold your tongue! Let Eda find out for herself what his father was. He is dead and buried.

so what does it matter if his money survives him? Why shouldn't a grazier be as good as any other Welby in Norfolk? Lord Trefford had the greatest respect for him."

Fred drew a long breath—half of relief, half of perplexity.

"Would you let her marry an impostor? You would leave her to find out the fraud too late!"

"My dear Mr. Blount, if you were darling Eda's step-mamma and as tired of her as I am, you'd sympathise with the impostor."

After all, the threatened interview did not come off, perhaps thanks to Mrs. Jernyngham's good offices, but Fred had a bad quarter-of-an-hour with his conscience that night.

"If that little cat means to let you marry her step-daughter on false pretences, I'll be no party to the transaction," he announced to Welby at the close of a stormy interview next day.

"You may do as you please, but I presume you will, at least, complete your present engagement," Welby replied coldly.

"Oh, I'll finish off Daffodil. The sooner the better; there's storm at hand. But I'll not meet the Jernynghams again."

A hot, unnaturally bright sky, with a ragged fantastic pile of dark clouds in the west. Daffodil was first at the tryst, standing among the languid, over-blown yellow flowers, her head down-bent, watching the sullen, stagnant water slide slowly by.

She wore her working dress, and held her old cloak tight around her. She heard them coming and lifted her head to greet Welby with a glowing smile that made Blount shake in his shoes. The rose was opening with a vengeance.

She seemed to have been told beforehand what was required of her, for she placed herself directly in the required attitude; Welby giving some whispered suggestions that made her drop her eyelashes and dimple; while Fred set up his easel and got to work with a dogged determination to make a speedy job of it.

He was exasperated and yet fascinated with his work. The graceful pose of her figure, the look on her uplifted face, the tender touch of her white slim fingers—how had he not observed before how white and slim they were; on the rough bark, where to-day there were real, veritable initials cut—by whom, he wondered—joined with a true lover's knot. And the smile of languid bliss on her face, the light in her eyes, as she listened to Welby's murmured talk! "It's a cowardly, blackguardly business; I've no right to stand by and see it!" he murmured half-aloud between his set teeth. Then again, as he worked on her firm, humorous mouth and square, resolute chin, he felt it almost an impertinence to suppose her so slight a thing as to be harmed by Welby's sham sentiment. Surely her eyes were laughing beneath their dropped lashes, as if she read his thoughts.

He stopped reluctantly at last when Daffodil's patience seemed to have come to an end, and departed to the farm to bespeak the

Marrables' dog-cart to convey him away on Sunday. Returning thoughtfully through the orchard, voices reached him from the river bank; voices raised incautiously loud in anger and expostulation.

"My dear girl, be reasonable. What should you in your quiet, safe life, here, know of the strain and stress of such an existence as mine? Ah, child, be happy; forget me, or rather think of me as a poor toil-worn wayfarer, on whose dreary path you have cast the flower of a smile, whose sweetness shall brighten the rest of his woeful pilgrimage."

"That's all stuff!" cried Miss Daffodil, with cutting decision. "It means you've got all you want, and mean to make off to town now the wet weather has set in. Oh, I know you! 'You thought to break a country heart for pastime ere you went to town,' as the *Lady's Own Penny Weekly* says. He was Roland Vere de Vere, you know, and she was spurning him."

"But you won't spurn me!"

"No. More's the pity. Well, go. Good luck to you. You won't even wait to do the third picture? Would you paint me if you found me lying there amongst the weeds and slime to-morrow?"

"Good heavens! don't talk so recklessly," cried Blount, horrified, jumping down between them. She burst into a hollow laugh at his face and words.

"Reckless, am I? You don't believe I'm in earnest? Come here this time to-morrow and see. You'll find me ready for your last sitting, and I promise never to trouble you more. Neither you nor anyone on earth shall ever set eyes on 'Liza Bacon again!"

She dragged her cloak over her shoulder and started off rapidly. The plank-bridge had been displaced by the giving way of the bank. It swayed and dipped under water as she sped across, and her last step sent it floating adrift down the stream. Welby had made no attempt to follow her this time, and she had waved Blount back imperatively.

"I say, Blount, I think I may as well go back with you on Sunday," Welby tried to say carelessly as they turned away.

"Do; that will allow you to keep your appointment here to-morrow," his friend answered sternly.

Rain in torrents fell all that night, all the next day, all the next night. The two men cooped up together, by mutual consent put the extreme limits of their small rooms between them. Rain, and rain, and rain! Welby's farewells were said and Fred's packing done. Sunday came at last, and five o'clock, and then the Marrables' dog-cart.

As they drove they could see the stream swollen to a rushing flood, overflowing its banks, and turning the low-lying land into an inland sea. The waters were out to the full span of the bridge, the old willow stood knee-deep, and the daffodils were drowned. The horses shied suddenly and then backed, refusing to cross it. Fred

plied the whip smartly, and soon started him again, but as he did so he felt his arm seized by Welby.

"Blount! For heaven's sake look there! *What* is it?"

Fred had little attention to spare from his horse, but a glimpse of Welby's face made his heart stand still for a second. He pulled up and looked back in the direction of his friend's shaking, out-stretched hand.

Something floated idly on the face of the water, entangled in the boughs of the willow.

It was a woman's Zulu hat, and close by a handful of dead daffodils.

The two men's eyes met in ghastly panic; and Fred, lashing the horse, they fled through the driving rain at a mad gallop.

Their train was in waiting. Welby dashed into the first carriage and flung himself back in a seat, his face concealed. Another passenger scrambled in on Blount's heels.

"Hullo, Onslow!" he cried out to the fourth traveller, a young fellow in the opposite corner to Welby; and "Hullo, Trefford! What are you doing down here?" Onslow replied.

"Just ran down yesterday to see how my sister is getting on."

"Your sister? Lady Pamela? Is she in this part of the world?"

"Yes. Overdid it racketing about at Christmas; was ordered country air, perfect quiet, new milk, that sort of thing. How she has lived through it all, I can't imagine. But you know Pam; she gets a joke out of anything. She got old Nurse Bacon to take her in, and has been masquerading as a sweet country maiden, told everyone that she was Nurse's niece by marriage, got asked out to tea up and down the village, went to the farm to learn to milk in case I take her to Canada next year, and has had a high old time." The youth stopped to have a private chuckle over some particularly comic reminiscence. "Pamela made me promise not to tell, but it's an awful joke. You know the artist—Tenby—Selby—what's-his-name? Pamela used to rave about his pictures. She heard he was sketching down there and made up her mind to get an introduction ——"

He stopped, for Welby had started up and was making his way to the other end of the carriage.

"Look out for her portrait in the Grosvenor. I'll tell you the rest some other time. She is going to look up the Jernynghams to-day."

The train stopped at a station. Welby dragged the door open, sprang out and disappeared in the dusk and rain.

No one knows who has become the proprietor of "Daffodil." She was not exhibited at the Grosvenor.

The county paper announces an approaching "marriage in high life—between the Dean of Dunstanborough and Eda, only daughter of Philip Jernyngham, Esq."

THE LEGEND OF S. WOLFRAM.*

THEY tore them from their mother's arms
  And from their childish play,
For they said, "We must have victims twain
  For the hungry sea to-day.
The ocean goddess wakes from sleep,
  She stretches out her hand,
And if she loose the water-floods
  They will o'erwhelm the land.

"Her voice is in the rising storm,
  Her shadow dims the skies,
And she shrieks aloud in every blast
  For human sacrifice!"

They drive the children down the beach—
  Ah! work of shame and sin—
And bind them fast to wooden stakes
  Where the swift tide comes in;
And then to face their awful doom
  The two young creatures wait,
While on the dyke the gathering crowd
  Looks down to see their fate.

Ah! mother, vain are all your prayers,
  Your sobs and tears how vain!
Does the mighty ocean goddess reck
  Of human grief or pain?
The tide comes rushing madly in,
  The winds blow fresh and free,
You scarce can mark the children's heads
  Above the angry sea.

The throngs increase, the heathen king
  Comes down and takes his place,
And at his side S. Wolfram stands
  With sad and troubled face:
Vain all his prayers and preaching, vain
  His toil by day and night,
This people walk in darkness yet,
  And *will not* see the light.

"Nay, I'll believe," King Radbod cries,
  "Your God is strong to save,
If you can bring those helpless lads
  From yonder watery grave."
And loud he laughed—the mocking throng
  Replied with laughter loud,
But louder Wolfram's answer rang
  Above the jeering crowd.

"The God I serve is strong to save
  On ocean as on land;
The very water-floods He holds
  In the hollow of His hand,
And if He wills that I shall live,
  No wave shall touch my feet;
And if He wills that I shall die,
  Then such a death were sweet."

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* S. Wolfram, Apostle, of Friesland, laboured there from 700-720, in vain endeavours to spread Christianity and to abolish the sacrifices of human lives to the Pagan deities. The incident chosen is the legendary account of his final triumph.

He turned him from the monarch's side,
The people held their breath;
Who dares to face a sea like that
Prepares for certain death:
The foaming waves rush wildly in
And thunder on the shore,
You could not hear the children's cries
Above that mighty roar.

Yet swiftly down the rocky beach
Went on the saintly man;
"Thrice fool is he," the people cried,
"Who tempts the Goddess Ran."
And then a sudden silence fell
On all who stood around,
For Wolfram walked upon the sea
As though on solid ground.

As though upon some green hill-side
Amid the flood he stood,
And cut the children's cruel bonds
That bound them to the wood.
He drew them from the sweltering tide,
"Now, nothing fear," spake he,
"But call on Him who walked the waves
In distant Galilee."

And taking in his kindly grasp
A child on either hand,
Across the raging, trackless waste
The three came back to land.
"Oh! mother, clasp again your sons
Safe and unharmed," he cried;
"Now will ye not believe on Him—
On Christ the crucified?"

With wet the children's raiments streamed
But Wolfram walked dry-shod;
Then with one voice the people cried,
"How great is Wolfram's God!
The gods we serve are not as this,
With all their vaunted powers:
Oh! Wolfram, teach us of your God,
And we will make Him ours.

"Then wash us in the mystic flood
That cleanseth sin away,
And sign us with the Holy sign
We take for ours to-day."
And Wolfram rendered thanks to Heaven
With eyes that glad tears dim,
That Christ uplifted on His Cross
Draws all men unto Him.

Thus with its double meanings quaint,
The strange old legend runs,
How Wolfram won, for God, the hearts
Of Friesland's savage sons.

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

A SOLDIER'S DARLING.

A True Story.

CORPORAL JIM BATTLE was the biggest man in the regiment, with a heart in proportion to his frame.

Into that heart had crept the tiniest personage, who, small as she was, completely filled it; little Elsie Matthison, aged six: "that blessed little one," as he always called her. Before Jim was promoted to corporal, he had acted as bâtman to the captain of his company, Elsie's father; hence the devoted friendship which had sprung up between the giant and the child.

She was the most lovable little fairy imaginable, and quite the pet of the regiment—the Royal Fusiliers, then quartered at Broilempore, in Central India.

But it was the real or fancied likeness in her to Jim's only little sister, whom he had buried just before he left England, that first drew Elsie into his heart. In his simple, uncouth way, he made quite an idol of the child. Instead of spending his frugal pay in the regimental canteen on beer, he would spend it in the native bazaar, or European shops, on small presents for his blessed little one. One of his most important investments had been a "mina" (an Indian talking bird), in a wicker cage, whom they christened in fun the "Chowkidar," or watchman, since it seemed always wide-awake, which was more than might be said, perhaps, for its namesake.

Sometimes, on Jim's morning visits to "the Captin's" bungalow, the native servants used to think he had gone stark staring mad. And well they might, to behold the stately corporal prancing up and down the verandah like a playful young elephant, with Miss Elsie perched on his broad shoulders, and "finishing" an imaginary race in the most approved style. Then, maybe, a loud guffaw from two or three officers seated at "chota hazree" with Captain and Mrs Matthison, under the peepul tree in the compound, would bring the giant to his senses and "attention," and make him pull himself up to his enormous height so suddenly as nearly to smash the amateur little rider's skull against the low rafters.

On the rebuke from her mother, "Elsie, you young romp, get down, and come here directly! I won't have you tease the corporal!" the Lilliputian jockey would dismount from her Brobdignagian steed and bound towards the group looking very winning and picturesque with her pretty laughing face, and loose wavy tresses—rich brown with a golden tinge, as if reflecting a gleam of sunshine. Then, as she approached the table, perhaps the youngest officer—a newly-joined subaltern—would swing her up into the air again and give her a hearty kiss, vowing that "she was a little stunner, and should be his

wife some day, as sure as eggs were eggs, when his ship came home."

The hot weather at Broilempore was at its height, when Europeans were struggling to keep cool, tortured by chronic, unquenchable thirst, and actual nausea at the very sight of food. No amount of "thermantidotes,"* "khus-khus tatties," or punkahs could counteract the effect of the grilling temperature; and outside the bungalows, the dry, scorching west winds, laden with particles of irritating red sand and dust, choked the copper-coloured atmosphere, and made the furnace-like glow still more unendurable.

At night, when the wind lulled for a few hours, the air of the station, both without and within doors, could only be compared to the dry smouldering heat of a lime-kiln, during which it was almost impossible to obtain any natural rest, tortured as was the sensitive skin with the maddening aggravations of mosquitoes and "prickly-heat." In short, Broilempore, pleasant enough in the cold season, was by no means a bed of roses during the hot months, any more than any other Indian stations on the plains; and so the Fusiliers found to their cost.

One sultry day after another dragged its slow length along, each seeming hotter and longer than the last, and everyone was panting for the rains to set in and cool the heavy atmosphere. As a natural result of the protracted heat, fever became rife throughout the cantonments, and amongst those laid low for a while was little Elsie. But the attack was mild, and she quickly recovered from it.

Unhappily, however, while in a state of convalescence, and tired of being confined in the house, she was seized with an irresistible impulse to slip out of bed, huddle on her clothes, and steal towards the Public Gardens to hear the band play. There, to his profound amazement, Corporal Battle came upon her, hiding behind the "milk" hedge which surrounded the gardens.

It was raining—a sudden shower having descended without warning—the first herald of the approaching "monsoons"—and Elsie, striving to seek shelter under the hedge, was rapidly getting wet through.

"Lord ha' mussy on us! little missie! You out here in all this rain," cried Jim, in consternation; "and the faver still on ye, too! Why, you'll catch yer death! You naughty girl! How dare you!"

And there and then he caught her up in his powerful arms and ambled off to the bungalow, to put her back in her little cot, scolding her right well the while.

Elsie cried bitterly, for a cross word from kind old Jim was too dreadful for her to hear.

"Oh! Jim, dear Jim! please don't be angry with me," she sobbed, piteously; "I couldn't help it. I'm quite well again, you know

* A contrivance for impelling a current of air into a room:—from *thermos* heat and *antidotos*, a counteractive.

and I only wanted to hear the music. And oh! Jim, *please* don't tell."

"Tell! There won't be no need to tell, I'm fearin'; but anyways, I sha'n't," he added, softening at her grief. "There; now make haste into bed again, do, like a dear little angel." And with that he stalked out of the room and left her to Ninneah, the ayah; returning presently when she was undressed and safely under the blankets.

"Come, come, my little 'un," he murmured, soothingly, stooping his tall form over the cot and kissing the still sobbing child, "don't ye cry any more, don't ye now. Jim only done it for the best, and ye mustn't mind him speakin' sharp to ye a bit. *I* sha'n't split, and Ninneah won't neither, will ye, Ninneah? That's all right, then. Good-night, my little 'un, and God bless ye."

As the honest corporal wended his way back to barracks he felt a painful dread as to the result of his little pet's escapade; and, alas, his apprehensions proved only too well founded. In a very few days the bungalow of the Matthisons was the scene of anxious grief. In a room, darkened by every ingenious appliance for keeping out the heat and glare, lay the wasted form of poor little Elsie, who had paid the penalty of her indiscretion by bringing on a fresh attack of fever, which had developed into a malignant type.

The distracted father and mother, who watched day and night beside their darling, fancied they saw that frail floweret fading slowly before their eyes; and as the dread suspicion dawned upon them, they clung to the child with a wild despair at heart, and poured out their prayers to God in His mercy to avert the cruel blow.

Ninneah, notwithstanding Jim's coaxing, had duly reported Elsie's dangerous freak, and had brought upon the little girl a much severer scolding than the kind-hearted corporal's, although the latter seemed to her by far the most dreadful. Ah! how the doting parents now regretted every harsh word spoken to the little truant, who seemed so surely gliding from their hands; how tenderly they nursed and petted her, and wished that they could bear instead that angry fever, which childlike folly had provoked!

The room dedicated to Elsie was, like most Indian bedrooms, on the ground floor, and opened on to her parents'; though Mrs. Matthison scarcely used their own apartment since her little darling's illness, for she would never leave the side of her cot, and only took snatches of sleep on a chair-bed made up close at hand.

For some days after the relapse Elsie scarce spoke, even to her mother; and while the fever was at its height, was in an unconscious state. But the virulent malady left its victim suddenly, when she was able once more to recognise those around her.

It had left her, true; but oh! how changed! What a poor, emaciated little wreck of her former self! a mere shadow of the blithesome child whose roguish laugh was wont to ring through the

house and cheer its inmates like the notes of a carolling bird. The doctor had pronounced the crisis past, but the mother, with maternal instinct, *knew* that their child was still in imminent danger. The violent fever had so fearfully reduced her little frame that there was too good cause for apprehension; and where the strongest man is often unable to battle against such utter prostration, what chance, she thought, had this poor feeble infant?

As soon as Elsie recovered consciousness, her mind seemed to wander back to her delinquency, in having played the truant on that fatal evening; and the first words she whispered were to beg forgiveness of her mother, who was watching by her cot, alone; Captain Matthison being absent on garrison duty at the time.

"My darling pet," murmured the poor sorrowing lady, in choked accents, and pressing her lips to the little burning brow, "we were only vexed for a moment, and for your own dear sake; we must think of nothing now but how soon we can make you well again."

The child shook her head and smiled faintly.

"I don't think I shall ever get better, mamma, dear," she answered. "I feel so ill—so tired and ill—I'm afraid God must be very angry with me, mamma."

She could not help remembering that even dear, kind old Jim had been cross with her on that occasion, and in her extreme lassitude fancied she must have done something very wicked, for which God was punishing her.

Her mother tried to soothe the poor wandering little mind, and assured her that He would hear her prayers and forgive her for every fault, when she said anxiously:

"Mamma, will you ask Him, please? I can't alone."

The grief-stricken mother then knelt down by the bed, and at her behest prayed aloud long and earnestly, and besought compassion on that tender lamb, the child's parched lips moving in tremulous whispers as she repeated the words. Elsie then seemed more composed and happy; and afterwards, when her mother had given her some cooling draught and smoothed out her feverish pillow, she fell into a peaceful sleep that lasted nearly two hours.

When she awoke at length it was evening, and the music of one of the bands was heard playing in the public gardens. As the distant melody stole into the sick-room, a sweet smile flickered across the small white face of the little sufferer, and Elsie opened her eyes and closed them again, in tranquil ecstasy at the strains.

Even in health, it is a delicious feeling to be awakened gradually from sleep by soft music stealing in upon the senses; but to the dying, whose emotional impulse is ethereal rather than mortal, the earthly harmony floats through the air in the sound of a heavenly song, and lifts the panting soul upward to the realms of angels' minstrelsy.

Elsie listened as in a trance until the music ceased, when she

re-opened her eyes and murmured gently: "Mamma, darling, is that God's band I hear? Has He sent it to play me up to heaven? Yes, yes, I think it must be. This is His answer to our prayer, mamma; and—and I'm going soon—very soon now."

She ceased speaking for a few moments, and Mrs. Matthison, weeping silently in suppressed agony, placed a cool sponge to the little hot lips, which presently moved again in a fainter murmur.

"I want to say good-night now, but—I cannot—I can't remember anything, and it is getting so dark. Where is Jim, mamma? Has he not been here to see me? Oh! I must see dear old Jim before —before God takes me away."

Yes, little Elsie, every day in the broiling sun has Jim made his pilgrimage to learn tidings of his "little 'un"; and often three and four times in the day, when he could get away from barracks, has the faithful soldier wandered to where his "sweet darlint" lay sick unto death. She was too ill to see anyone, and Jim had never dared even ask to be admitted, although a painful apprehension, increasing every hour, made him yearn with a terrible longing to look upon her little face once more.

At that very moment when she inquired for him he was leaning against the stone pillar of the gateway only a few yards off, hovering near the spot after his usual visit, and clinging, as it were, to this frail link 'twixt him and another world. As he stood thus his stalwart form shook with passionate grief, for he felt too surely that his little friend was going to leave him for ever; nor did he attempt to restrain the scorching tears which rolled down his bronzed cheeks at the grievous, heart-breaking thought.

"Would you like to see Jim, my darling?" asked her mother, in reply to Elsie's gentle mutterings. "Shall I send for him?"

"Yes—oh! yes—please do, mamma. I—I want to speak to him *so* much!"

They had not far to send, and in a few minutes the tall soldier stood beside the little cot. He had greeted the welcome summons with a thrill of delight, and hastened to obey with quick, though noiseless footsteps. But oh! what crushing sorrow succeeded that momentary joy, when he looked with swimming eyes on the tiny wreck before him!

He entered the room on tip-toe, and his tread was marvellously soft, but the child's quick ear detected his presence in a moment, although he moved so cautiously. With a mournful little smile—what a painful contrast to the merry, laughing glance he knew so well!—she held out her poor thin hand to him, and he took it tenderly in his, while his strong frame was convulsed with a deep sob, which all his efforts could not control.

"You mustn't cry, Jim," she whispered, gently. "I have longed to see you to tell you this—to tell you how happy I feel, and—and —you're not angry with me now, are you, dear? Mamma has

orgiven me, and you never said a cross word to me till—till the ther night, did you?—when I know I deserved it."

Jim shook his head, he could not speak.

"Yes, dear, I did. But never mind. I—I wanted to tell you omething else." She paused for a minute, as if to collect her houghts and gather strength to speak. "Do you know, Jim, I'm oing away—from you all, but I want you—never to forget me—and lways—to be the same kind, good old Jim—that Elsie loves so nuch; and—and you'll keep the chowkidar for my sake, won't you, ear? Now kiss me—once more."

Poor Jim, with aching heart, which ached the more from the orturing efforts to conceal his grief, bent down over his little play- llow and kissed her for the last time. Then, after another pause, he continued, her murmurs growing fainter and fainter:—

"Yes, I am going away—far away now—to your dear little sister ou told me of, and we will watch over you together. But you must e *so* good, Jim; and you must always think of us both up in eaven—and come to see us—by-and-by. I know how you loved er, dear, just as you love me; and last night—I dreamt I saw her —and to-night—to-night I am going to where she is. Hark! there t is again!"

She held up a finger to hush them from sobbing, and her eyes ecame fixed on the ceiling with a far, far away look, for at that noment the distant music of the band was heard again, the floating armony rising and falling on the fitful breeze.

The dying child listened with a calm seraphic expression on her ttle wan face, as the low sweet strains were wafted to her ears; and resently her lips moved again, when her mother leant down to atch the slightest whisper.

"Yes, it is the band, mamma. God's angels, so bright, so eautiful. Oh, kiss me. They are waiting—waiting to take me now."

The anxious listeners heard no more. The whispers died out in a eak, trembling sigh,—

> "And softly, from that hush'd and darken'd room,
> Two angels issued where but one went in."

She had fled! Little Elsie had followed the earthly music on its pward flight; then leaving it, was carried far beyond the reach of nortal sounds, to be welcomed at the gates of heaven by God's holy hoir. Mourn not for her, sorrowing parents, 'twere better thus— etter that she should leave this tear-stained world, this perilous and of woe, while she deemed it yet a paradise, and knew nought of he heavy chains which weigh the full-grown mortal to the dust.

Weep not for her, Jim Battle, weep not that Jesus has taken thy ittle darling to His bosom, where she nestles now in everlasting eace and joy. She is safe there. Under His protecting love and nercy that blessed little one is now blessed indeed.

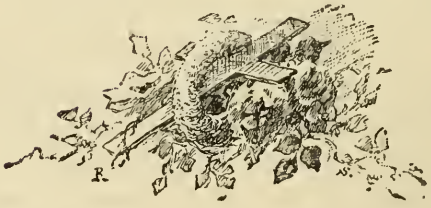
Nearly three months have passed since he lost his little treasure, and still, like a faithful dog, Jim pays daily visits to a certain small mound in the Station Cemetery which, for some time, is all that marks the spot where she lies. The grass had grown green and long over the little grave ere a marble slab was placed at its head in loving memory—for the mason had been slow to execute the order—but when at length it did appear, the beautiful inscription on its face seemed to open afresh the wound in the honest soldier's heart. Each day, with a sort of sorrowful pleasure, Jim Battle spelt out the following touching lines, inscribed beneath that name so sweet in his recollection:

Another little form asleep,
  And a little spirit gone;
Another little voice is hush'd,
  And a little angel born:
Two little feet have gone the way
  To the home beyond the skies;
And our hearts are like the void that comes
  When a strain of music dies.

The birds that sit on the branch above
  Now sing a requiem
To the beautiful little sleeping form
  That used to sing to them.
But never again will the little lips
  To their songs of love reply;
For that silvery voice is blended with
  The minstrelsy on high.

"Of such is the kingdom of Heaven." St. Matthew xix. 14.

THEODORE A. SHARPE.



AT THE VILLA BORGHESE.

"ECCO ROMA!"

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

CHAPTER XVI.

CAPTAIN RALEIGH DINES OUT.

LOVE, we are often told, is only an episode in the life of a man, although it is a woman's whole existence, and, no doubt, there is some truth in the saying. While the episode lasts, however, it generally fills up quite as much of the man's thoughts, especially if he be an idle man, as it does of a woman's, and the image of Vera filled up so much of Captain Raleigh's mind as to leave very little margin for any other thoughts. He took a languid interest in politics and the news of the day, and a civil interest in the conversation of his mother and the few people he came in contact with in his own home, but the one absorbing interest of his life was Vera. He thought of her by day, and he dreamt of her by night; and the months of his holiday, instead of passing all too quickly, dragged wearily on; each month achieving one good purpose, since it brought Vera's twenty-first birthday a month nearer.

When Captain Raleigh came down to breakfast a day or two after Mr. Ryot Tempest's second marriage: of whose engagement even he had not heard: his furlough was nearly over. Six more weeks and he would be on his way to India again, there to remain till the following March, when he would return to England in time for Vera's twenty-first birthday. He hoped to be able to effect an exchange, which would enable him to come home. If he failed to do so, he meant to retire, since no professional hopes should prevent him from redeeming his promise to Vera on her coming of age.

As the time for leaving England drew near, a great longing to see her once more before he sailed took possession of him, and he came down to breakfast one morning resolved to write that very day and ask Mr. Ryot Tempest's permission for a final interview.

He was down a few minutes before his mother, and, having read his letters, one of which contained an invitation, which he half-decided

to accept, to spend a week with some friends at Plymouth, he opened the *Times*, and the first thing which caught his eye was the following announcement of Mr. Ryot Tempest's marriage :

" Ryot Tempest—Jamieson.—On the 18th inst., at Ashchurch, by the Lord Bishop of the diocese, cousin of the bride, the Rev. Edward Ryot Tempest, Rector of Woodford, to Marion (Poppie), widow of the late E. Jamieson, Esq., of the Grange, Ashchurch."

Captain Raleigh flung down the paper, and strode angrily across the room to the window, his sleepy eyes blazing with anger, his pale face paler than ever with suppressed rage, as he gnawed fiercely his under lip to keep in the words he had in his heart to utter against the woman who, having spoilt his youth for him, would, he knew, do her utmost to ruin his happiness for life. The temptation to curse her was both fierce and sudden, but he was skilled in the art of self-control, and the storm of passionate anger which swept over his soul was powerless to injure it. He remained by the window seeing nothing but the advertisement he had just read till he heard his mother's step in the dining-room, and, as he turned to greet her, there was no sign of the storm he had just been weathering ; he was, if anything, more languid than usual. He picked up the newspaper and, handing it to his mother, pointed to the marriage notice without saying a word.

Mrs. Raleigh was a little delicate woman ; a gentlewoman in every sense ; refined, with a manner that was eminently gracious in the fullest meaning of the word ; who, fragile as she looked, had, nevertheless, borne many sorrows in the course of her life with patience and resignation.

" My dear Arthur, how terribly soon after his wife's death ! And what a contrast, from all you tell me, to Vera's mother—she a devout, saintly woman, and this one a dashing, handsome, worldly widow—a poppy, indeed—showy, handsome, but intoxicating and noxious; all very well to admire at a distance, but very dangerous to transplant into your house, to say nothing of your heart. Poor man ! I fear he will live to repent it."

" Possibly ; but my sympathies have not reached him yet, they are all with Vera. It will make her life miserable. And I am sure of this : Mrs. Jamieson—I beg her pardon, Mrs. Ryot Tempest—will not leave a stone unturned to make mischief between us. Mother, can I warn Vera, do you think ? The circumstances have changed entirely since I promised to hold no correspondence with her, but I suppose that does not absolve me from my promise, does it ? "

" I think not. But didn't you tell me that Vera has a nurse to whom she is much attached ? Why not warn her ? She will take care to tell Vera, no doubt ; and if you send no letter or message, I don't think it would be any breach of honour. You can make the nurse promise not to say where her information came from if you like."

"I will. This nurse is sister to the village blacksmith at Woodford. I'll get her address from him, and go and see her. I have had an invitation to Plymouth this morning. I think I will accept it. I can visit this Norah on my way back."

Mrs. Raleigh inwardly grudged every day her son spent away from her, but she saw this news had upset him, for he ate no breakfast. So, like the self-effacing woman she was, she encouraged him to go to his Plymouth friends, and entered, with loving interest, into his arrangements for his visit.

Captain Raleigh never cared for society, and just now he was less inclined than ever to cultivate its charms. So, when on arriving at Plymouth, he was informed there was a dinner-party in the house that night, he inwardly wished he could conscientiously plead sudden illness to excuse himself from dining. Not even the information imparted to him by his hostess that she had allotted to him an exceedingly pretty girl, reconciled him to his lot.

He entered the drawing-room with his most languid air, just as dinner was announced; and judging from his appearance there was every prospect that the pretty girl told off to him would find him exceedingly uninteresting.

"Just in the nick of time, Raleigh; let me introduce you to Miss Ryot Tempest," said the host hurrying through the introduction with the lady he was about to take into dinner on his arm.

In the general move which was taking place, few people observed the sudden change in the faces and manners of Captain Raleigh and the lovely but sad-looking girl in mourning to whom he was presented. Those who were near enough to see must have guessed they were more than mere casual acquaintances who had thus unexpectedly met; for the girl's pale face was covered with a blush of delight and her lovely eyes flashed with joy; while if an angel from heaven had been suddenly introduced to Captain Raleigh the angelic presence would have failed to elicit such a look of supreme happiness as spread over his handsome face as Vera, for it was she, laid her little hand in his.

"Vera!" he murmured under his breath as he drew the little hand through his arm, and the two mechanically followed in the wake of the others. "How came you here?" he asked, bending down to slake his thirsty eyes at the wellspring of his earthly happiness.

"It is all that dear, kind Uncle George's doing; I am sure it is. I am staying with him, you know, and papa has told him all about us. I did not want to come here to-night at all, but he insisted upon it, and pretended it was only because he considered I had been shut up long enough," said Vera.

"But how did he know I should be here?"

"Oh! he is very intimate with our host; I expect the two have planned it between them."

"And made us their debtors for life," said Captain Raleigh with an affectionate glance at his host.

The dinner and wine were both excellent, but they were utterly wasted upon this couple, neither of whom knew or cared what they were eating and drinking. The meal lasted over two hours, but it seemed to them no sooner were they seated than the signal for the ladies to rise was given. During that all too short two hours not even the shadow of the new Mrs. Ryot Tempest had dimmed the radiance of their joy; they had been too much absorbed in each other to permit the thought of any third person. His own future plans Captain Raleigh found time to communicate, and he learnt that Vera was to remain at Plymouth for the next three weeks, when she would return to Woodford. And by the time this information was imparted, the ladies rose.

As soon as the rustle and bustle their retreat caused had subsided, Vera's uncle, a retired naval officer, moved across the room and took her vacant chair by Captain Raleigh's side.

Captain Tempest was no bigger than his brother, but he was very unlike him in every other way. He was handsome, with a pink and white complexion, eyes something like Vera's, and clean-cut features. His manner to ladies was as perfect as that of naval officers usually is; to men it was courteous and easy, with not a trace of Mr. Ryot Tempest's nervousness; to Captain Raleigh it was as charming as Captain Tempest could make it.

"I have to thank you for the happiest evening of my life, sir," said Captain Raleigh after a few introductory remarks had been exchanged.

"Not at all, my dear fellow. I am only too glad to do you and my dear little niece, whom I love as my own daughter, a kindness. As for my brother, I have not common patience with him, but it is just like him; he always was the fool of the family; he has played the part well all his life and I suppose will continue to do so to the end of the chapter. He ran away with a French school-girl, which for a young parson was pretty foolish to begin with, seeing she was a Catholic. Then he has his children baptised by one of your priests to please her, and brings them up Protestants to please himself. So much for his youth. Now, when he might be supposed to have learnt wisdom, he objects to you as a son-in-law solely because your religion is the same as Vera's mother's. As I told him, I supposed what was sauce for the goose was not sauce for the gosling in this case. And now, to crown all his folly, before his wife has been dead a year he has gone and married that dashing, worldly, designing woman, Mrs. Jamieson, who'll lead him a fine dance if half I hear of her is true. And serve him right, too."

"I fear it will spoil Vera's home for the ten months she still has to live in it."

There was a pause, and then Captain Tempest said in an undertone:

"Why don't you marry her now from my house and take her out to India with you? I'll give the breakfast with pleasure."

Another sudden and sharp temptation for Captain Raleigh. There was nothing on earth he desired so much as to take Vera out with him as his wife, and what was to hinder him since her own uncle suggested it. She would lose no caste by being married from her uncle's house instead of from her father's; not a breath of scandal could attach to such a wedding; since Mr. Ryot Tempest was abroad with his bride, it would seem to outsiders a very sensible arrangement. Wasn't it a beneficent Providence who had watched over him and brought him to Plymouth in order to grant him his heart's desire? Why should he not put out his hand and grasp the apple?

Because it was an apple, after all; it was forbidden fruit. He could not break his word of honour to Mr. Ryot Tempest even to win Vera, and if he knew her she would despise him if he proposed to do such a thing.

"What do you say to my proposal?" asked the impetuous little Captain.

Captain Raleigh shook himself as if to shake off the devil who was tempting him to consent.

"I must say no. I gave Mr. Ryot Tempest my solemn promise I would neither attempt to see nor write to Vera till she was of age, and I cannot break it. Our meeting to-night was so purely accidental—indeed, as far as we were concerned, so unavoidable—that I cannot accuse myself of having broken my promise, but I shall leave Plymouth by the first train to-morrow."

"Quixotic, sir; but I honour you for it. I consider Edward's marriage to a great extent absolves you from that promise, but it is a matter for you to decide. I can only regret my inability to help you," said Captain Tempest warmly.

"There is a way you can help me. I may possibly not speak to Vera again this evening——"

"Oh, won't you! I'll see to that," thought Captain Tempest.

"I want her to know her step-mother will leave no stone unturned to separate us, even to the length of announcing my marriage to someone else. Will you warn her? She is aware that in my salad days I was engaged to Mrs. Jamieson, but her guileless nature will never suspect the length a jealous woman's spite can carry her."

"She shall be armed cap-à-pied. By the way, have you heard her brother has made a terrible mésalliance—married the blacksmith's daughter? Vera will tell you all about it. And now suppose we go into the drawing-room."

This news didn't appear to affect Captain Raleigh much; and when he reached the drawing-room he was sent to the piano to turn over Vera's music whilst she played and sang; and then he was asked to sing himself whilst she accompanied him; Captain Tempest and

their host and hostess taking care neither of them should leave the piano till Captain Tempest's carriage was announced.

"Raleigh, will you bring my niece down and wrap her up carefully, please?" cried that good-natured uncle as he led his wife down to the hall; and had he wished, Captain Raleigh could not have refused.

"Here are Vera's shawls; take her out of this draughty hall, Raleigh; she'll catch cold after singing," said Captain Tempest, pushing Vera and her lover into the dining-room when they got downstairs and shutting the door upon them. Then he experienced great difficulty in finding his own overcoat; and when found it was a minute or two before, with the help of a conscious footman, he got into it satisfactorily. Then he lost his gloves, and having turned out all his pockets, finally discovered he had them on; and then only would he pay any attention to all his wife's impatient hints, and, after much rattling of the handle of the dining-room door, put his head in and ask if Vera were ready.

Seven blissful minutes had been snatched from time by kind Captain Tempest, and scarcely seven sentences had been spoken by those lovers, and yet neither of them ever thought that they had wasted their opportunity.

"I leave to-morrow morning, my own love," whispered Raleigh as he wrapped a shawl round Vera's gleaming shoulders.

Vera's answer was to take his hands in hers and look into his face beseechingly as she whispered:

"Because of Rex's marriage?"

"What? Because of my promise. What has Rex to do with us?" said Raleigh, folding the slim figure to his breast.

And then they became too much absorbed in each other to heed the fleeting moments till Captain Tempest's rattle at the door disturbed them.

"Be true, my love; be true for ten more months," said he.

"For ever," whispered Vera as she tore herself from his embrace.

"Vera, my dear, the horses won't stand and your aunt is nervous," said Uncle George; and then Vera was put into the carriage, feeling profoundly indifferent as to what the horses did—they might run away or shy or stand on their hind legs if it pleased them.

If she could only sleep through the next ten months of her life! But nothing seemed further from her than sleep just then, unless it was happiness. Overpowered with grief and excitement at the scene she had just been through, she fell back in her corner of the carriage sobbing as if her heart would break, while Captain Tempest inwardly composed a letter to his brother containing a few home-truths, which was written and posted before he went to bed: for if it had the effect he desired of obtaining Mr. Ryot Tempest's consent to Vera's immediate marriage, there was no time to lose.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FUCHSIA-BELLS.

Mrs. Jamieson's servants received permission from their mistress to give a party in honour of her marriage before leaving the Grange. A cheque was left with the butler to defray the expenses, and the day was fixed for the Monday following the wedding, in order that Mrs. Tanner might be present. This party had been talked of for weeks, and unknown to their mistress the servants had decided the entertainment should take the form of a fancy-ball, but this was kept a profound secret from the powers that were. Mr. Ryot Tempest's servants were naturally invited, and Mrs. Canter, who was well-known to Mrs. Tanner, had received an invitation; but balls were not in her line, so she sent a characteristic refusal, though, as it happened, she afterwards went. Mark Brown, the cook and Mary were of the party, and indeed the unanimous opinion was that the palm for ingenuity in the choice of a costume, and for "elegance" in embodying the poetical thought which the cook evolved from her inner consciousness, must be given to the Rectory-maids.

They went as Fuchsia-bells.

And this is how they clothed this flowery idea, which, as Mary said, was as witty as it was pretty; and so "innocent-like" too, for of course their partners would all spell bell with an e at the end.

They wore pale green satin bodices which were supposed to represent the calyx of the fuchsia, short pink tarletan skirts, festooned over purple satin petticoats to represent the carolla or bell, and yellow shoes and stockings to represent the stamens. The rough, red arms and shoulders of the cook were, in the opinion of that young woman, chastened and subdued by the delicate hue of the green satin bodice, and when the Fuchsia-bells were announced the room rang with their praises.

"So refined," said the butler, who, by way of displaying his modest opinion of himself, and choosing a part he was well able to support, was got up as the heir to the throne.

"So elegant," said the present Mrs. Ryot Tempest's maid, who was dressed as Twilight in one of her mistress's trousseau dresses which came home from the dressmaker's in the nick of time.

"So lady-like," said a footman, who never lived with any but county families, so was in a position to pronounce this judgment.

"So stylish," cried the village grocer, who, with a view to trade rather than to personal comfort or æsthetic effect, came as a sugar-loaf.

"Such bong-tong," said a lacquey, who had just returned from the Riviera, and so had forgotten his native tongue.

The company had hardly recovered from the entrance of the Fuchsia-bells, when Mark Brown appeared as a Bishop of the Established Church. Mary had dressed him in some of her master's clothes, having cut up one of his surplices for the lawn-sleeves, which her observation of the Bishop's costume on the wedding-day enabled her to copy fairly well.

His entrance crowned the triumph of the Fuchsia-bells, and the Grange servants confessed the Rectory servants quite deserved their respect and notice. Needless to say the conversation was almost entirely confined to discussing the affairs of their various masters and mistresses, especially those of Mr. Ryot Tempest, until an unexpected arrival soon after the ball opened turned the current of their thoughts into another channel.

About eight o'clock a violent clashing of the bell was heard in the pause between two dances, and immediately after Mrs. Canter, dressed in her best, stood on the threshold of the ball-room, her widow's mourning making a striking and lugubrious contrast to the gay costumes of the rest of the company. The butler, with one of the Fuchsia-bells on his arm, advanced to receive her, but instead of replying to his greetings, Mrs. Canter placed a hand on each of her ample hips and fairly shrieked with laughter.

The butler looked pompous, the Fuchsia-bell, Mr. Ryot Tempest's cook, blushed crimson, but Mrs. Canter laughed on remorselessly till the tears ran down her rosy cheeks; then she began to recover and gasped out: "Law! cook! well, there! upon my word!" and similar ejaculations between her peals of laughter.

"Better late than never; Mrs. Canter, come in, ma'am," said the butler, secretly condemning Mrs. Canter's conduct as very vulgar, while he expressed his sympathy with the Fuchsia-bell by squeezing her fat red arm against his side.

At last, after several ineffectual attempts to do so, Mrs. Canter managed to explain her sudden appearance in the following words.

"Bless you, I haven't come to the ball; I have come for Mr. Ryot Tempest's address, and I am going back as soon as I have got it. I came all the way from Liverpool for it."

"From Liverpool! We are expecting Mrs. Tanner from Liverpool every minute," exclaimed the butler.

"My patience, cook, I can't get over you," said Mrs. Canter, with another slight relapse into a second fit of laughter.

"I don't see anything to laugh at. Everyone says my costume is exquisite; and so becoming," said the poor Fuchsia-bell, ready to cry with vexation.

"There's no accounting for taste, then. But you won't see Mrs. Tanner here to-night, nor to-morrow either; she won't be back till Monday, if she is then. Why, there is Mary, as sure as I am a living woman, dressed as great a sight as cook. You have both lost your senses; heads you hadn't to lose; two sillier girls I never met. All I

hope is you have not lost your master's address, for I have come all the way from Liverpool to get it."

"Have you, indeed, Mrs. Canter? I can tell you it. He is at Paris, Hôtel du Louvre, till Monday next," said the other Fuchsia-bell hanging on the arm of the lacquey who had wintered abroad.

"Oh! well, he'll get a telegram that'll keep him awake to-night in the course of another hour or so," said Mrs. Canter mysteriously.

"Whatever has happened?" asked the cook.

"Sure Miss Vera hasn't eloped with the Captain," said Mary.

"Never you mind what has happened; it won't please Mr. Tempest nor his new wife neither. Well, I have seen many sights in my life, but never such a sight as you two girls have made of yourselves. It was worth coming from Liverpool to see you. I must be off again. I am going to sit up with Reuben to-night, as soon as I have telegraphed to Mr. Tempest, and then I am going off by the first train to-morrow morning. You don't mean to tell me that is Mark Brown dressed up like a bishop? Mercy me, what a pass things have come to!"

"Yes; Mark is a bishop and we are the Fuchsia-bells," giggled Mary.

"Future Bells, indeed! I only wish I had the ringing of you two fools I call you, past, present and future, too. Fools you are, fools you always were, and fools you always will be."

"Fuchsia, the flower, not future, and everyone says we have dressed them beautifully," said Mary.

"Dressed them, indeed! You water the fuchsias and answer the bells and you'll do. And if you'll take my advice you'll take off those dresses and put them on the back of the fire as quick as you can, if you wish to have a rag of character left." And with this parting piece of advice Mrs. Canter went out from the bright ball-room into the dark night, leaving the company to speculate freely on what the news she had to communicate to Mr. Ryot Tempest could possibly be; and the Fuchsia-bells to reflect that if they acted upon her suggestion there would certainly not be a rag of their costumes left. And as just then their dresses were dearer to them than their characters, they did not take Norah's advice.

Her appearance, however, had cast a shadow over the Rectory servants; the Fuchsia-bells could not recover their self-complacency, and were inwardly conscious that Mrs. Canter's judgment, though severely expressed, was not far from the truth; and Mark Brown was so excited by her vague and mysterious news, that all pleasure had departed from him, and he only longed for the time when he could get away, that he might pursue his search for Janet. All he knew about her was that she was safe, and this he learnt from his master. Unknown to Mrs. Canter, he had been over to Ashchurch, but unless the people there had deceived him, Janet had not been seen since she left for her father's cottage. Find her he would; of that he

was determined ; and as he twisted and turned one of the Fuchsia-bells through the mysteries of a quadrille, he decided to go to Liverpool by the first train the next day, for he felt certain Mrs. Canter's journey there and back had something to do with Janet, and he began to suspect that Mrs. Tanner knew all about her.

That Mark was right in his last supposition we already know. He was also right in suspecting that Mrs. Canter's mission to Liverpool was connected with Janet. The truth was she had been summoned to Liverpool by telegram on Saturday night, and, on her arrival on Sunday, found the baby very ill—so ill that Janet vowed nothing on earth should induce her to sail the next day ; and Mrs. Tanner being at her wits' end to know what to do, sent for Mrs. Canter to help her.

"We have had a doctor," said Mrs. Tanner, looking at the little suffering baby, which lay moaning on its mother's knee, its little white face drawn with pain.

"Umph ! you might as well have sent for the nearest cat—doctors know nothing of babies ; what does he say is the matter with this one ? " demanded Mrs. Canter.

"Cold, he thinks."

"Nonsense. If he can't think more sense than that he had better not think at all ; the child has no cold ; it is ill because its mother is ill. Janet wasn't fit to travel, and, of course, the child wasn't. Janet is strong, and will get over it ; the child is delicate, and I don't know that it will. As for taking it on board ship to-morrow, it would be murder."

"But the passage is taken," objected Mrs. Tanner. "And Mrs. Jamieson—Tempest, I mean—will never forgive me if Mrs. Reginald misses the boat."

"I can't help that. All I know is Janet can't go to-morrow," said Mrs. Canter, rising from her knees, for she was kneeling by Janet's feet watching the baby. She now beckoned Mrs. Tanner out of the room.

"The child is dying. It may live through to-morrow, but I doubt it, and it is Madam Jamieson who has killed it. If she had left Janet alone for a few days to recover the fatigue of that night, the child might have recovered too, though it would have been ill. Now, I don't think there is a chance for it. We shall see in the morning. What time does the boat leave ? "

"Ten in the morning."

"Well, it'll go without Janet, that is all I have to say. If the passage-money has to be sacrificed, I can't help it ; they'll have to send another telegram to Master Rex, too. Madam has plenty of money, and it is all her doing, so she can pay for it. The child will die, and the mother will break her heart. A good thing she is going away ; she'll have all the less time to brood over it."

Mrs. Canter's diagnosis of the baby's illness turned out to be correct, and her opinion as to the result of the illness also. It lived

through the night, but about the time the New York steamer was leaving the docks, the baby breathed its last.

Its plaintive moans grew weaker and weaker, and at last, without a struggle, it sighed itself into eternity. One gentle sigh, and it was gone, with a smile of welcome to the angel who fetched it on its little thin white face; gone from a world of sorrow and pain and sin to that land where there are neither tears, nor pain, nor sin, but which would not be heaven unless children's voices joined in praising the children's King. We suffer our little children to go unto Him now that we may have them with us for ever hereafter; we forbid them not, pain and grief as it is to lose them, because we know that "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

But no such thoughts brought any comfort to Janet's stricken soul in the first bitterness of her sorrow; she was wild with grief for a few hours. On the night that Reuben stole her baby she had lost it altogether, body and soul, for an hour or two, but now she still held the little lifeless body in her arms; the soul the angels had taken. The little cold clay form lay on her knees, the sweet, innocent smile on the pure baby lips unstained with sin; but she dared not strain the little cold body to her bosom lest she should disturb the awful calm of those infant features; she dared not scream, as in her agony she would fain have done, lest she should disturb the eternal sleep which had fallen on her little one; wake it she knew she could not; not all the wealth, nor all the science, nor all the prayers of living men and women could do that, and yet wealth and science and prayer are three mighty powers.

She was still full of life and youth and strength, but this precious object of her affections was dead; never again would those smiling baby-lips move; never again those delicate, transparent eyelids open; never again would those tender tiny baby fingers clutch at her dress. Her treasure was dead, and, in the first agony of her sorrow, Janet felt one half of her had died with it.

She was stabbed to the heart when the child drew its last breath, but so long as it lay on her knees the knife was not withdrawn, and, as the wounded savage dreads the withdrawing of the arrowhead so she dreaded the removal of her child.

"Take him away, Aunt Norah," she said, at last. And as Norah with streaming eyes, carried the little smiling corpse out of the room, a rush of grief flooded Janet's soul, and she threw herself on the floor in the wildness of her sorrow.

They left her alone, poor broken-hearted mother, for awhile, and by degrees she grew calmer, but no persuasion could induce her to look again at her darling. It must be buried, of course, but let her know nothing of the painful details. She was now possessed with one idea: to get to her husband as quickly as possible.

"I can't stay here; I shall go mad if I do. I must go to Rex, Aunt Norah; send me to Rex."

"Yes, child, yes; but we must send for Mr. Tempest to arrange the passage for you, and there is only one way of doing that. I must go to Woodford to-night, get his address from those silly servants of his and telegraph to him," said Mrs. Canter.

"Then go, Aunt Norah; please go at once," cried Janet. And so Norah went.

It struck her several times during her visit that Janet had something on her mind, and for this reason was so impatient to get to her husband, for hitherto she had evinced no desire to go until he sent for her. Janet was strangely silent as to her visit to her father, and was very angry with the doctor when he said the baby had taken cold. Altogether, she puzzled her aunt.

Mrs. Canter was unwilling to leave Janet, but she could not be away for more than another night; and Mrs. Tanner, although fear of Mrs. Ryot Tempest's displeasure had half paralysed her, was capable of taking care of Janet. And so Mrs. Canter left her with an easy conscience.

Life was just now full of charm to Norah Canter; she was truly sorry Janet had lost her baby, and equally sorry that Reuben was lying dangerously ill in the cottage hospital; but to find herself wanted in three places at once was a delightful sensation, only marred by the physical conditions which prevented her from supplying the threefold claims on her presence. She was, no doubt, a remarkable woman, but she was not ubiquitous. So she could not be with Janet at Liverpool, with Reuben at Woodford, and with the little Canters and the linen at Marling. But she did her best, and since a neighbour had offered to sleep with her children for two nights, she proposed spending Monday night with Reuben.

On leaving the ball-room, where her laughter was partly due to over-excitement, she first of all sent off a telegram to Mr. Ryot Tempest, informing him of the death of his grandson, and then she went to the hospital to sit up with Reuben, who was the only patient, while the nurse went to bed for a good night's rest. In point of fact, this was a work of supererogation on her part, for the nurse could get help if she required it; but it pleased Mrs. Canter to think her services indispensable, and though she had been up all the previous night with Janet and the baby, she entered on her duties as fresh as a new-laid egg.

Reuben still lay in a critical condition. The fever ran high, he knew no one, and he spent the greater part of the night in tossing restlessly about his bed, talking deliriously. Mrs. Canter tried to make out from his rambling words what had really taken place on the night of Janet's return, for she didn't altogether believe Janet's version of the story: which was, that missing her father in the course of the night, she had gone out to look for him, and not finding him, had wandered on and on until she fell exhausted on Mrs. Tanner's door-step. Not a word did Janet breathe of the disap-

pearance of her baby, and she was as certain as her aunt that the child did not die of cold, though her very anxiety to prove this struck Mrs. Canter as peculiar and somewhat suspicious.

At first Norah thought that Reuben's constant cries of "The child, the child; where is the child?" referred to Janet; but as the night wore on, and time after time he started up from a restless sleep exclaiming: "I left it here: where is it?" she felt certain he referred to the baby, and remembering where he had been found, she gradually convinced herself that Reuben had certainly seen the baby, and she suspected had hidden it away from Janet.

Towards morning he grew more violent, and it was as much as she could do to hold him, shrunk as he already was, in bed, as time after time he started up screaming in a voice of agony: "I didn't do it! I didn't do it!"

Then he would mutter unintelligibly for some minutes and then Norah caught Vera's name and Janet's; and once he called out distinctly: "I saved her life; thank the Lord, I saved her life," but whether he referred to Janet or Vera or the baby Mrs. Canter could not tell.

She was not sorry when at seven o'clock the nurse came to relieve guard, though Reuben was then sleeping fitfully.

"If I didn't know Mr. Foreman so well, I should say he had something on his mind: he is always raving about some child, and declaring 'he didn't do it,' though what he didn't do I don't know. But sick people have strange fancies," remarked the nurse.

Mrs. Canter assented to this last proposition as she donned her widow's bonnet. Then she stooped and kissed her brother. And then, as she made her way to the station, she racked her brains to discover what could have taken place on that eventful night.

Even when she had made large allowance for Janet's desire to get to her husband, it struck her as very strange that she should think of leaving England while her father lay in so critical a state; and still more strange that Janet should have been found fainting on Mrs. Tanner's door-step, and Reuben insensible by the canal: unless, as she suspected, Reuben had turned his daughter and her baby out of his house, and had afterwards repented and gone to look for her.

"It is no use puzzling over it; it is a mystery, and I can't get to the bottom of it," was the conclusion she finally arrived at as the train reached Marling, where her thoughts now reverted to the little Canters and her professional duties.

Reuben's illness and Janet's loss were driven from her mind as soon as she set foot in her laundry by the criminal conduct of one of her washerwomen whom she caught in the very act of soaping some flannel garments. Now to soap flannel was in Mrs. Canter's code the one sin for which there is no forgiveness, and before she had been home five minutes, the sinner had been bundled out neck and crop.

"If I had been a few hours later: which, if poor Reuben had died, I should have been: there would not have been a single flannel thing in the place worth a halfpenny. If I have told you women once I have told you a thousand times flannels are never to be soaped, but are to be washed in a lather or they all shrink. But I might as well get a pipe and blow bubbles as waste my breath in talking to you."

A suppressed giggle went through the laundry at the idea of Mrs. Canter indulging in so puerile an occupation as blowing bubbles; and in a few minutes Norah had taken off her weeds and was occupying the offending woman's place at the wash-tub; her mind wandering constantly from the flannels and the lather to the telegram she had sent off the previous night.

This telegram was brief and condensed as a telegram should be and rarely is; moreover, it was to the point.

"Grandson dead. Come at once." So it ran; and it left Mr. Ryot Tempest in no doubt as to the course which he was expected to pursue.

It was not pleasant to be summoned home so abruptly on his honeymoon, and Mr. Tempest knew Mrs. Canter well enough to guess that she experienced a certain grim satisfaction in telegraphing to him as a bridegroom that his grandson was dead. It at once dashed all romance to the ground and took the sugar off the wedding-cake as it was intended to do. If he could by any possibility have got off going to Liverpool, he would have done so for many reasons. It was a troublesome business he had to settle when he arrived; it was disagreeable to be torn from the arms of his bride; and last, but not least, he was a bad sailor, and the passage was a positive terror to him. He soon found, though, he must go, and go at once, or incur his wife's displeasure, for she was considerably ruffled by the telegram. He could see she had great difficulty in controlling her temper, and had not the slightest intention of forfeiting one penny of the passage money if she could help it.

"You must go at once, Ryot, dear. Tanner is a perfect fool, and that dreadful woman, Canter, will only make matters still worse. As for Janet, I suppose she is helpless. I am afraid you can't get her off by Thursday's boat; you can't arrive in time; but go by next Monday's packet she must, even if you have to stay and see her off," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who by the way had introduced a hyphen into her husband's name.

And Mr. Tempest, feeling as if he were in the presence of a volcano, which might at any moment break out into an eruption, meekly agreed to every suggestion, and started off by the earliest train on Tuesday morning, leaving his Peerage and his Lemprière at Paris, since his time and his thoughts would be so fully occupied, he would have no leisure for study. To his great relief the baby was buried an hour or two before he arrived, and as Janet was now poss-

essed with the one idea of getting to her husband as soon as possible, he had no difficulty in persuading her to start by Thursday's boat; but what arrangement he made with the company as to her passage-money was a profound secret between them and him. All the wife of his bosom was ever told was, that there was nothing extra to pay. If there was, Mr. Ryot-Tempest and his hyphen paid it and sinned against truth.

Janet sailed early on Thursday, leaving Mr. Ryot-Tempest plenty of time to get on to Paris that night if he chose. But his little body quailed before the thought of crossing the Channel so soon again, and he resolved to have a good night's rest in his own home before encountering the miseries of the steamer. Accordingly he had an early luncheon and then left Liverpool for Woodford by the same train Mrs. Canter had travelled by on the previous Monday.

Now the fancy ball at the Grange had been so successful, that the Rectory servants had determined to return the hospitality they had received, by giving a party on a smaller scale, and as ill-luck would have it they chose Thursday evening for their entertainment; so that when Mr. Ryot-Tempest arrived, the fun had begun.

A sound of revelry greeted him as he walked into the hall, and on the stairs sat one of the Fuchsia-bells with the continental lacquey's arm round her waist.

"Oh! Mr. Simmons, you do talk so beautifully, it is like a book. Law! here's master!" exclaimed Mary, rising to her feet and clinging to the balusters to support her, as she caught sight of Mr. Ryot-Tempest.

He glanced in horrified amazement from the pale green satin body down to the yellow shoes and stockings, and then up from the yellow shoes and stockings to the green satin body and Mary's crimson face and neck.

"Mary! What is the meaning of this unseemly attire?"

"Oh, dear, sir! if you please, sir! we are having a few friends in and I am a Fuchsia-bell, sir, but I would not have had you see me like this for worlds, sir," and Mary began to sob hysterically, while the lacquey slipped into the drawing-room where the dancing was going on, to warn the guests of Mr. Ryot-Tempest's unwelcome presence.

"A few lunatics apparently; a more indecent scene in the house of a Christian clergyman I cannot conceive. Go upstairs and take off that disreputable costume, and when you are decently clothed, come to my study," said Mr. Tempest, who could catch through the open drawing-room door a glimpse of what to him looked like Pandemonium, as Mark Brown, masquerading as a bishop, danced past with Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's maid in his arms.

Mr. Ryot-Tempest had not the moral courage to face this assembly, so he turned to the dining-room just as the music ceased and the guests were made aware of his presence.

To his surprise supper was laid out in the dining-room, and as good a supper as anyone could wish to sit down to. Indeed, tired and hungry as he was, he longed to sit down and dine himself.

"What am I to do? I can't send them away supperless, and I can't countenance such wanton conduct; what a dilemma I am in! I wish I had not come home," he muttered to himself as he made his way to his study hoping to take refuge there.

But again he was doomed to disappointment, the study had been turned into a cloak-room and some of the furniture from the drawing-room moved into it; while on a sofa sat the other Fuchsia-bell and the Grange butler again personating the Prince of Wales.

The guilty pair rose to their feet and turned as pale as if they were in the presence of a ghost when Mr. Ryot-Tempest appeared. The cook had sufficient presence of mind to seize an antimacassar and wrap round her red shoulders and arms, while she devoutly wished the ground would open and swallow up her and the Fuchsia-bell, calyx, petals, stamens and all.

"Cook, I believe I should be justified in ordering your immediate removal to the county asylum. I will, however, content myself with requesting you to retire, and when you are decently clad I shall have more to say to you. George, my confidence in you is shaken; I will say no more. It will be for your mistress to decide what course she will pursue. Meanwhile, kindly tell all who are present I must request that the dancing be stopped; but I hope no one will leave till they have had a good supper."

The discomfited Fuchsia-bell had left the room long before this speech was ended, and at its conclusion the butler, muttering some confused thanks, was only too glad to escape.

Mr. Ryot-Tempest sank on to a chair to recover from the shock his servants had given him. He had not been seated long before Mark Brown, in his ordinary dress, looking as smug and as innocent as his master could wish, entered the room. "I have been away from home for a few days' holiday or this would never have happened; but I hope, sir, seeing it is in honour of your marriage, you will overlook it. Cook is young, sir, and so is Mary."

"Their conduct is quite inexcusable; Mark, say no more. Mrs. Ryot-Tempest will deal with the matter. Meanwhile, is it possible for me to have a room to myself in my own house, and something to eat after my fatiguing journey?"

"Certainly, sir. I'll take some hot water to your room, and by the time you are ready, supper will be here for you," said Mark.

And in ten minutes' time Mr. Ryot-Tempest returned to find his study cleared and a tempting supper set out for him; three or four men-servants having devoted their energies to getting it ready. By his plate were placed some letters and papers, and among them was a letter from Captain Raleigh telling of his accidental meeting with Vera, and asking whether, now that her home-life would be so

different, Mr. Ryot-Tempest would reconsider his decision and consent to the marriage. A postscript announced that Captain Tempest had written to Paris to the same effect.

That postscript was destined to play a more important part than the writer intended; for it eventually, and before many days had elapsed threw a very strong light on the character of Mr. Ryot-Tempest's second wife.

Captain Raleigh's letter gave him so much to think of that he postponed interviewing the Fuchsia-bells till the next morning, when they received as long and as severe a lecture on their unseemly conduct as they deserved. They had just been dismissed when the Grange servants arrived to apologise, and were treated to a long and very similar discourse, and by the time these duties were fulfilled, Mr. Ryot-Tempest was obliged to start for Paris.

He was inclined to give his consent to Captain Raleigh's proposal, but before deciding he wished to consult his wife and to see what his brother had to urge on the subject. So he deferred answering the letter until he reached Paris, and Vera's happiness meanwhile hung trembling in the balance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARK BROWN IS DIPPED.

MARK BROWN'S journey to Liverpool in search of Janet was a failure. He left Woodford early on Tuesday morning after the fancy-ball at the Grange, and reached Liverpool in the middle of the day, and spent the afternoon and evening, and the whole of the following day, wandering about the city in the forlorn hope of meeting Janet. By Thursday morning his patience was exhausted, and, having arrived at the conclusion that he was engaged on a wild-goose chase, he returned to Woodford, baffled and angry, but more determined than ever to discover the truth about Janet.

Cross and disappointed as he was, he consented to put on his bishop's dress and act as host, when he heard there was to be a party at the Rectory that evening; partly for the sake of the supper, partly because there was some chance that Mrs. Tanner, who was expected home that day, might be present, and partly because the excitement diverted his thoughts from Janet, with whom he was more madly in love than ever.

His astonishment when the lacquey told him his master was in the house was only equalled by his anxiety to get out of his masquerading attire before Mr. Ryot-Tempest caught sight of him. He failed in this, but he was unconscious of his failure since the Rector thought it better to take no notice of the indiscretion.

What could have brought Mr. Ryot-Tempest home so suddenly in the midst of his honeymoon?

This question exercised Mark greatly, and his first action, after changing his clothes, was to examine his master's portmanteau to see where he came from. He had no difficulty in discovering, for Mr. Ryot-Tempest was very precise and old-fashioned in such matters, and his portmanteau was duly labelled "Passenger from Liverpool to Woodford." Clearly, then, his journey was connected with Janet, for that she had been, or was still, at Liverpool, Mark felt certain.

The next morning, when he went to sweep Mr. Ryot-Tempest's study, he carefully searched for any letters which might throw some light on the matter, but with no success, for Mr. Ryot-Tempest was exceedingly particular about his letters, and never left them about. In the waste-paper basket, however, Mark had the luck to find Mrs. Canter's telegram. It was torn, but he pieced it together and read it; and gnashed his teeth with rage as he did so.

"Grandson dead; come at once," read Mark; and the telegram was from Mrs. Canter, giving an address in Liverpool of a street Mark remembered to have passed down once or twice. To know that he had been so near Janet without discovering her made him curse his ill-luck; but to learn that Reginald Tempest was the father of Janet's child made him curse both Janet and Reginald. And yet, though the telegram told him much, it did not tell him all. It did not tell him Janet was Rex's wife, and it never occurred to his ignoble mind that she was so.

Full of anger and revenge as he was, he managed to conceal his feelings from his master, and as soon as Mr. Ryot-Tempest was safely off the premises he started again for Liverpool, though this second journey made a large hole in his wages. But what did he care for that, seeing he had Janet's address in his pocket, and, as he supposed, such evidence against her as must compel her to marry him?

On reaching the house in Liverpool he discovered three things. First, that Mrs. Tanner had returned to Woodford with Mr. Ryot-Tempest; so he might have obtained all the information he wanted from her, and saved himself the trouble and expense of this journey to Liverpool. Next, he found out that Janet was no less a person than Mrs. Reginald Tempest. And, lastly, that she had sailed for New York, where her husband was to meet her, the previous morning. All this information he learnt from the servant at the lodging-house, and he went from the door not loving, but hating Janet with all his heart. So long as there was any chance of possessing her, he had loved her as well as he was capable of loving anyone, if, indeed, such love as his was worthy the name; but now he knew he could never call her his wife—in all probability, would never see her again—his love was turned to hate.

He hated Janet, he hated Reuben, he hated Rex; most of all, perhaps, he hated Vera, who he felt sure had abetted Rex in winning her; though, as we know, Vera was innocent of any such thing. Yes, he hated them, and he would be revenged on them if possible.

Janet and Rex were out of his power; the Atlantic would soon roll between him and them; but there remained Reuben and Vera; on them he would wreak his vengeance.

He was in no hurry; he could bide his time. Meanwhile, there was their meeting at midnight by the canal-side to be accounted for; there was a fine piece of evidence against them; who could tell to what account that might not be turned?

Mark returned to the Rectory in a vile temper, and for the next few weeks made himself so odious to cook and Mary that they wrote to Mrs. Canter and told her if Mark didn't leave when their master and mistress returned, they should, as he was simply unbearable.

About a week before the bride and bridegroom were expected home, Mark took it into his head that he would go to the hospital and pay Reuben a visit. He was convalescent now, Mark knew; and perhaps the news he had to tell him might do him good, thought Mark maliciously.

Reuben by this time was on the road to recovery. The fever had left him, but he was as weak as a rat; and the day Mark called he was sitting up for the first time for a few hours. His easy-chair was moved to the window that he might look out at the fresh green trees and the blossom-laden hedges of the opposite meadows. His Bible lay on his knee, but the strong muscular hands that used to wield his sledge-hammer so easily were now not strong enough to hold the book for more than two or three consecutive minutes. But this was of little consequence since his head could not stand more than a verse or two at a time. Moreover, to look out at the trees and the bright blue June sky after his illness was an absorbing interest.

"Would you like to see Mark Brown?" asked the nurse of her gigantic patient, whose handsome face and almost pathetic weakness had touched her heart.

"Yes," said Reuben in a weak voice, thinking a word in season might not be wasted on his convert.

"You may go up for ten minutes, but be careful not to excite him. Don't mention his daughter to him. He does not know she has left England yet," said the nurse to Mark Brown as she let him in.

"He'll know it soon, then," thought Mark to himself, as he went upstairs, where, to do him justice, Reuben's altered appearance at first shocked him into prudence.

"Yes; I am very weak, Mark, but though the Lord has chastened me, He has not given me over to death, and I get stronger daily. And no wonder, if you knew the quantity of nourishment I take, for I am as hungry as a hunter."

"When will you be leaving here?"

"In another week or ten days, I trust."

"It'll be very lonely for you going home to your empty cottage," said Mark, with meaning.

Reuben started, and a troubled look came over his handsome

face, thinned as it was by suffering, both mental and bodily. For, from the time he fell insensible by the hollow tree till he woke to find the fever had left him as weak as the baby he had lost, his mind was a blank. He remembered distinctly every incident of that terrible night up to that point. Since then he knew nothing, and much as he yearned to know what had become of the baby, he had not yet dared to make any inquiries. That Mark could enlighten him he had very little doubt, for the man was an arrant gossip.

"Perhaps it won't be empty," he said, and there was a note of interrogation in his voice.

"Are you thinking of marrying again, then, like the master?" said Mark with an engaging leer.

"No, but I still have Janet," said Reuben doubtfully.

"She won't be much company for you, though; she is in America with her fine gentleman husband by now," said Mark cruelly, watching the effect of his words and inwardly hoping they would wound the stricken man. They did so. For some minutes Reuben did not speak; he hid his pinched, shrunken face with one of his thin hands, and Mark had the satisfaction of seeing some great tears drop through the spread fingers.

"The Lord's will be done," said Reuben at last.

He said it in all sincerity, for his conscience told him he deserved that Janet should leave him without a word of farewell, seeing how he had treated her. But God only knew how hard it was to accept what he considered a just punishment, for something whispered that he had something to forgive as well as Janet.

So he had, and Janet had left a letter with Mrs. Canter, asking her father's forgiveness, but, in Reuben's weak state, they had not yet dared to let him have it, fearing a relapse would follow upon any excitement.

Mark Brown had no such fears. He neither knew nor cared what the result of his news might be on the patient; he had come to have his revenge, and he was having it. But he had another shot to fire yet, and his ten minutes was nearly up.

"Yes," he said. "She and her fine husband are enjoying themselves in America, and her baby is buried here in England."

Reuben clutched the elbows of his chair with his lean hands, glanced like a maniac at the now cowering Mark, burst into a loud laugh, horrible to hear, and fell back insensible.

The nurse heard the laugh, and came rushing in.

"Be off with you and fetch the doctor, if you don't wish to die on the gallows. You have killed him with your silly chatter," she exclaimed angrily as she very unceremoniously pushed Mark out of the room, and then got Reuben to bed again.

The fever returned, and that night Reuben was again tossing deliriously from side to side of his bed. Before the week was out, Mrs. Canter was telegraphed for, as his condition was critical, and

the doctors had not much hope of his recovery. But once again he rallied; a weaker man would have died; but his splendid constitution pulled him through, though the fever left him as weak as an infant. Even now the danger was not over, for another relapse would be fatal. But all immediate danger having passed, Mrs. Canter returned to Marling a day or two before Mr. and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest were expected home.

Before she left Woodford, where it was well-known that Mark Brown was the cause of Reuben's relapse, she had arranged with his fellow-servants to punish him for his disgraceful conduct.

"Let me get him to Marling, and I'll pay him out," had said Mrs. Canter; and then it had been settled that she should take back with her some curtains to wash which could not be trusted to a less experienced laundress, and then Mark should be sent to fetch them the evening before the bride and bridegroom's return.

It was with great difficulty that Mark was induced to go, for he was not anxious to encounter Mrs. Canter. But the other servants were peremptory, and made out the world would come to an abrupt end if their master and mistress returned before the curtains; so in the end he consented; though, could he have seen the preparations Mrs. Canter was making for his reception, he would certainly have refused. She placed her largest wash-tub in the centre of her laundry, about an hour before Mark was expected; then she summoned Mary Jane, and with her assistance filled it from the other wash-tubs: soap-suds, rinsing-water, dirty-water, blue-water, all went in till the monster tub was quite full. Then giving her daughter instructions to show Mark Brown into the laundry when he arrived, Mrs. Canter, vested in a huge apron, her sleeves rolled up over her enormous arms, took up a position in front of a wash-tub at the opposite side of the laundry to the door.

"I'll dip him, and I'll be bound my dipping will do him a deal more good than the one he got at Reuben's chapel," she muttered to herself.

Presently Mark's voice was heard in the kitchen, and the next minute Mary Jane ran in saying: "Mother, here is Mr. Brown."

"Come in, Mark. You have come for the curtains. Here they are. I'll give them to you as soon as I have wiped my hands," said Mrs. Canter, as the unsuspecting Mark walked into the middle of the laundry, and stood waiting in the very spot where Mrs. Canter desired him to be, namely, with his back to the large wash-tub, which was shallow, though of gigantic circumference.

"Before I give you the curtains, I just want to say a word to you," began Mrs. Canter, advancing towards her victim, who retreated a step as she put out one of her crinkled hands and seized him by the collar. A dexterous push, and the next moment Mark was sprawling in the wash-tub, his heels in the air. The tub was slippery, and in trying to extricate himself from his undignified position, his head and

shoulders were immersed, but by dint of much struggling and splashing, he at last managed to scramble out, Mrs. Canter haranguing him all the while.

"There, now perhaps you'll know better than to go and upset a sick man, as you upset Reuben; small thanks to you that he is still alive. You can go home and tell Mr. Tempest I have dipped you this time; and if I have washed some of the mud off your soul, it is the best bit of washing I ever did in my life. As for the curtains, I'll send them by train; I always meant to. You can have the law of me if you like."

By the time Mrs. Canter had finished, Mark had regained his feet, and fearful lest the dose should be repeated, rushed out into the road with the water pouring in torrents off him, cursing and swearing as he went in a manner frightful to hear.

"Oh! mother, did poor Mark fall into the wash-tub?" asked Mary Jane.

"Never you mind; don't ask questions, or perhaps you'll have the same sort of accident," replied her mother, as she proceeded to wipe up the water Mark's passage through the kitchen had left.

This done, she tidied herself and took her sewing into the drying-ground; and wondered as she worked whether Reuben would recover, and when it would be safe to give him Janet's letter. And then her thoughts flew to Vera, and she wondered how she would get on with her step-mother, and how many changes the new Mrs. Tempest would make in the domestic arrangements at the Rectory: and above all, whether Mr. Tempest had yet repented of his folly, by which she meant his second marriage.

(To be continued.)

PRECEPTS FOR THE WELL-ORDERING OF LIFE.

OF LENDING AND BORROWING.

LENDING and borrowing may well go together; for they are like the Siamese twins—in principle inseparable. He who lends encourages borrowing; he who borrows depends on lending.

We do not, of course, refer here to business lending, such as forms the chief part of the banker's trade, and which forms a considerable portion of the rich solicitor's lucrative profession; because without such transactions business would stagnate, and the wings of enterprise would be sadly clipt. In such cases either credit or security stands against the loan, and, in strictness, it is rather a sale of money for a certain period than a loan—just as one may hire or buy the use of a horse for half-a-year, as well as for a week, a day, or an hour. Legitimate banking-business is the sale of the use of money for definite periods.

We refer rather to that kind of friendly and promiscuous lending, which would wholly lose its character were there any definite attempt to put it on a business basis. And there are no more insidiously dangerous indulgences than such lending and borrowing.

Shakespeare strikes the note very clearly here in Polonius's advice to Laertes—a passage which itself might be taken to prove the absolute absurdity of Voltaire's notion of the character which has infected the whole of the French criticism of "Hamlet"—to the effect that "the good man, Polonius, is an old dotard, much more crazy than Hamlet." Polonius says:—

> Neither a borrower nor a lender be,
> For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
> And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.

"Who goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing," says the old proverb; and another, namely Franklin, has it: "He that would know the worth of money, let him go and try to borrow some." A popular rhyme has it:—

> This world is the best we live in,
> To lend, or to spend, or to give in;
> But to beg or to borrow, or to get a man's own,
> 'Tis the very worst world, sir, that ever was known.

There is a Scotch proverb, beyond all others quaint and direct: "He that lends his pot may seethe his kail in his loof" (*i.e.*, may boil his broth in his hand).

Lord Bacon was wont to commend the advice of the plain old man at Buxton, that sold besoms. A proud, lazy young fellow came to him for a besom upon trust, to whom the old man said: "Friend, hast thou no money? Borrow of thy back, and borrow of thy belly, they'll never ask thee again; I shall be dunning thee every day." It is the same in high as in low life:—

> Lend Spunge a guinea! Ned, you'd best refuse,
> And *give* him half—sure half's enough to lose.

Sir Henry Taylor, after having set it down as a rule—"never to lend money to a friend, unless you are satisfied that he does wisely and well in borrowing it," goes on to say: "Some men will lend money to a friend, as it were, to purchase the rights of remonstrance; but the right so purchased is worth nothing. You may buy the man's ears, but not his heart or understanding."

The first time Douglas Jerrold saw a celebrated song-writer, the latter said to him, "Youngster, have you sufficient confidence in me to lend me a guinea?" "Oh, yes," said Jerrold, "I have all the confidence, but I do not have the guinea." Sir Henry Taylor thus briefly and naïvely describes the usual course of borrowing:—

"The ordinary course of borrowing is something like this:—A., becoming embarrassed, through some (perhaps venial) imprudence, is kindly assisted by his friends, B. C. and D. who, however, do not altogether approve his conduct, but then it would be ungenerous in them, under the protection of the favours they are conferring, to assail him with reproaches. So far all goes smoothly between A. on the one hand, and B., C. and D. on the other. But A., having, by the loans he has received, staved off any immediate consequences of his imprudence, is 'under a rather stronger temptation than before to forego the severe self-denial which would set him right again. He has now broken the ice in the matter of asking favours; he has incurred whatever humiliation belongs to it; and, having begged once, it costs him comparatively little to beg again. This process of begging and borrowing goes on, therefore, becoming continually more frequent and less efficacious; and as the borrower grows less and less scrupulous, he nourishes his pride (the ordinary refuge of those who lose their independence) and resents every repulse as an insult. B. C. and D. then discover that they are not to be thanked for what they have lent, but rather reproached for not lending more and more; whereupon they withdraw their friendship; and those who ignorantly look on, or, perhaps, hear the story of A. whilst B. C. and D. are silent, out of consideration for him, make remarks of inconstancy in friendship and the manner in which men are forsaken by their friends; and the desertion only leads the man to consider himself as a castaway and to throw himself into still more reckless and shameless courses.'"

And, by way of further discouragement of lending, Sir Henry goes on to say, in his simple and effective style:—

I have never known a debtor who was not, in his own estimation, an injured man; and I have generally found that those who have not suffered by them were disposed to side with them; for it is the weak who make the outcry, and it is from the outcry that the world is apt to judge. They who lend money to spendthrifts should be prepared, therefore, to suffer in their reputation as well as in their purse. Let us learn from the Son of Sirach:—Many, when a thing was lent them, reckoned it to be found, and put them to trouble that helped them. Till he hath received, he will kiss a man's hand; and for his neighbour's money he will speak submissively; but when he should repay, he will prolong the time, and return words of grief and complain of the time. If he prevail, he shall hardly receive the half and will count as if he had found it; if not, he hath deprived him of his money, and he hath gotten him an enemy without cause; he payeth him with cursings and railings and for honour he will pay him disgrace!

And Sir Henry very characteristically adds the following:—

I have known a man who was never rich, and was indeed in a fair way to be ruined, make a present of several hundred pounds, under what he probably conceived to be an impulse of generous friendship; but if that man had been called upon to get up an hour earlier in the morning to serve his friend he would not have done it. The fact was that he had no real value for money, no real care for consequences which were not to be immediate: in parting with some hundreds of pounds he flattered his self-love with a show of self-sacrifice; in parting with an hour's folding of the hands to sleep, the self-sacrifice would have been real, and the show of it not very magnificent.

On the declining of requests for loans we may set down the following:—

"In declining a suit," says Sir Arthur Helps, "do it without assigning any reason; for remember that in giving any reason at all, you lay some foundation for a future request."

And again:—

"To withstand solicitations for loans is often a great trial of firmness. . . . The refusal which is at once the most safe from vacillation, and perhaps as little calculated to give offence as any, is the point-blank refusal without reasons assigned."

And here we cannot help recalling the anecdote of the old Scotch Burgher elder, who was asked for a loan of fifty pounds by a friend who was inclined to be rather free in his ways of life. "Well, John," said the old Burgher, "I ken we wad quarrel afore I got the money back, and sae I think it best we sud quarrel while the money is in my pouch [pocket]."

The following, from the *Saturday Review* several years ago, is well worth inserting here:—

"One of the most striking peculiarities about thriftless people is a

constant expectation of sympathy, whenever their carelessness brings them into embarrassment. They speak of money as housekeepers speak of servants. The whole fault lies on one side, and that of course not their own. Money is to them what her trunks and band-boxes and baskets are to a nervous old lady on a journey; only the journey never ends, and the trunks are constantly missing, and the bottoms of the band-boxes perpetually tumbling out. The demon of greed bears them an especial grudge, and ever eludes their grasp. Nobody worthy of the name of friend can refuse sympathy for those against whom fortune is so spiteful. Then they will advance a stage, and demand practical illustrations of sympathy from their friends in the shape of a 'temporary obligation.' The obligation soon changes its character, and becomes consolidated. Friends as well as fortune quarrel with these unlucky beings, who then either drift into down-right beggary, or else, just contriving to hold their heads above water, pass their days in one continued and sordid struggle. Why we should sympathise with the folly and carelessness which produce such results is not evident. There are some forms of weakness which we may justly compassionate, but the loose self-indulgence and silly neglect which are comprised in thriftlessness deserve contempt rather than pity. Solvency is, after all, one of the prime social virtues, and the people who flounder helplessly through the world for lack of it have nearly always themselves to blame for the shallows and miseries in which their life is bound."

Suretyship is a kind of device by which credit is lent instead of money—a fact which doubles the risk in disguising the danger. Here Solomon, who declared severely enough against lending and borrowing, is at hand with his advice:—"He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it, and he that hateth suretyship is sure." The Scottish proverb, "Often the cautioner [or surety] pays the debt," is short and decisive enough; and the whole subject may be closed by us with the following shrewd passage from Lord Burleigh:—

"Beware of suretyship for thy best friends. He that payeth another man's debts, seeketh his own decay. But, if thou canst not choose otherwise, rather lend thy money thyself upon freed bonds, although thou borrow it. So shalt thou secure thyself and pleasure thy friend. Neither borrow money of a neighbour, nor a friend, but of a stranger, where, paying for it, thou shalt hear no more of it. Otherwise thou shalt eclipse thy credit, lose thy freedom, and yet pay as dear as to another. But in borrowing of money be precious of thy word; for he that hath care of keeping days of payment is lord of another man's purse."

FEATHERSTON'S STORY.

AT THE MAISON ROUGE.

IT was a lovely summer's day; and Madame Cardiac's neat little slip of a kitchen was bright and hot with the morning sun. Madame, herself, stood before the paste-board, making a green apricot tart. Of pies and tarts à la mode Anglaise, Monsieur Jules was more fond than a schoolboy; and of all tarts known to the civilised world, none can equal that of a green apricot.

Madame had put down the rolling-pin, and stood for the moment idle, looking at Flore Pamart, and listening to something that Flore was saying. Flore, whisking out of the petite Maison Rouge a few minutes before, ostensibly to do her morning's marketings, had whisked straight off to the Rue Pomme Cuite, and was now seated at the corner of the pastry table, telling a story to Madame Cardiac.

"It was madame's own fault," she broke off in her tale to remark: "if madame *will* give me her orders in French, and half the time I can't understand them. She had an engagement to take the tea at Madame Smith's in the Rue Lambeau, was what I thought she said to me, and that I must present myself there at half-past nine to walk home with her. Well, madame, I went accordingly, and found nobody at home there but the bonne, Thomasine. Her master was dining out at the Sous-préfet's, and her mistress had gone out with some more ladies to walk on the pier as it was so fine an evening. Naturally I thought my mistress was one of the ladies, and sat there waiting for her and chatting with Thomasine. Madame Smith came in at ten o'clock, and then she said that my lady had not been there and that she had not expected her."

"She must have gone to tea elsewhere," observed Madame Cardiac.

"Clearly, madame; as I afterwards found. It was to Madame Lambert's in the Rue Lothaire that I ought to have gone. I could only go home, as madame sees; and when I arrived there I found the house door wide open. Just as I entered, a frightful cry came from the kitchen, and there I found her dropped down on the floor, half senseless with terror. Madame, she avowed to me that she had seen Mademoiselle Lavinia standing near her in the moonlight."

Madame Cardiac took up her rolling-pin slowly before she spoke. 'I know she has a fancy that she appears in the house."

"Madame Cardiac, I think she *is* in the house," said Flore

solemnly. And for a minute or two Madame Cardiac rolled her paste in silence.

"Monsieur Fennel used to see her; I am sure he did; and now his wife sees her," went on the woman. "I think that is the secret of his running away so much: he can't bear the house and what is haunting it."

"It is altogether a dreadful thing; I lie awake thinking of it," bewailed Mary Cardiac.

"But it cannot be let go on like this," said Flore; "and that's what has brought me running here this morning—to ask you, madame, whether anything can be done. If she is left alone to see these sights, she'll die of it. When she got up this morning she was shivering like a leaf in the wind. Has madame noticed that she is wasting away? For the matter of that, so was Monsieur Fennel."

Madame Cardiac, beginning to line her shallow dish with paste, nodded in assent. "He ought to be here with her," she remarked.

"Catch him," returned Flore, in a heat. "Pardon, madame, but I must avow I trust not that gentleman. He is no good. He will never come back to stay at the house so long as there is in it—what is there. He dare not; and I would like to ask him why not. A man with the conscience at ease could not be that sort of coward. Honest men do not fly away, all scared, when they fancy they see a revenant."

Deeming it might be unwise to pursue the topic from this point, Madame Cardiac said she would go and see Mrs. Fennel in the course of the day, and Flore clattered off, her wooden shoes echoing on the narrow pavement of the Rue de la Pomme Cuite.

But, as Madame Cardiac was crossing the Place Ronde in the afternoon to pay her visit, she met Mrs. Fennel. Of course, Flore's communication was not to be mentioned.

"Ah," said Madame Cardiac, readily, "is it you? I was coming to ask if you would like to take a walk on the pier with me. It is a lovely afternoon, and not too hot."

"Oh, I'll go," said Nancy. "I came out because it is so miserable at home. When Flore went off to the fish market after breakfast, I felt more lonely than you would believe. Mary," dropping her voice, "I saw Lavinia last night."

"Now I won't listen to that," retorted Mary Cardiac, as if she were reprimanding a child. "Once give in to our nerves and fancies, there's no end to the tricks they play us. I wish, Ann, your house were in a more lively situation, where you might sit at the window and watch the passers-by."

"But it isn't," said Nancy, sensibly. "It looks upon nothing but the walls."

Walking on, they sat down upon a bench that stood back from the port, facing the harbour. Nearly opposite lay the English boat busily loading for London. The sight made Nancy sigh.

"I wish it would bring Edwin the next time it comes in," she said in low tones.

"When do you expect him?"

"I don't know *when*," said poor Nancy with emphasis. "Mary, I am beginning to think he stays away because he is afraid of seeing Lavinia."

"Men are not afraid of those foolish things, Ann."

"He is. Recollect those fits of terror he had. He used to hear her following him up and down stairs; used to see her on the landings."

Madame Cardiac found no ready answer. She had witnessed one of those fits of terror herself.

"Last night," went on Mrs. Fennel, after a pause, "when Flore had left me and I could only shiver in my bed, and not expect to sleep, I became calm enough to ask myself *why* Lavinia should come back again, and what it is she wants. Can you think why, Mary?"

"Not I," said Madame Cardiac lightly. "I shall only believe she does come when she shows herself to me."

"And I happened on the thought that, possibly, she may be wanting us to inquire into the true cause of her death. It might have been ascertained at the time but for my stopping the action of the doctors, you know."

"Ann, my dear, you should exercise a little common-sense. I would ask you what end the ascertaining it now would answer, to her, dead, or to you living?"

"It might be seen that she could have been cured, had we only known what the malady was."

"But you did not know; the doctors did not know. It could only have been discovered, even at your showing, after her death, not in time to save her."

"I wish M. Dupuis had come more quickly on the Monday night!" sighed Nancy. "I am always wishing it. You can picture what it was, Mary—Lavinia lying in that dreadful agony and no doctor coming near her. Edwin was gone so long—so long! He could not make up M. Dupuis. I think now that the bell was out of order."

"Why do you think that now? Captain Fennel must have known whether the bell answered to his summons, or not."

"Well," returned Nancy, "this morning when Flore got back with the fish, she said I looked very ill. She had just seen M. Dupuis in the Place Ronde, and she ran out again and brought him in——"

"Did you mention to him this fancy of seeing Lavinia?" hastily interrupted Madame Cardiac.

"No, no; I don't talk of that to people. Only to you and Flore; and—yes—I did tell Mrs. Smith. I let M. Dupuis think I was ill with grieving after Lavinia, and we talked a little about her. I said

how I wished he could have been here sooner on the Monday night, and that my husband had rung several times before he could arouse him. M. Dupuis said that was a mistake; he had got up and come as soon as he was called; he was not asleep at the time, and the bell had rung but once."

"What an extraordinary thing!" exclaimed Mary Cardiac. "I know your husband said he rang many times."

"That's why I now think the bell must have been out of order; but I did not say so to M. Dupuis," returned Nancy. "He is a kind old man, and it would grieve him: for of course we know doctors *ought* to keep their door-bells in order."

Madame Cardiac rose in silence but full of thought, and they continued their walk. It was low water in the harbour, but the sun was sparkling and playing on the waves out at sea. On the pier they found Rose and Anna Bosanquet; and in chatting with them Nancy's mood became more cheerful.

That same evening, on that same pier, Mary Cardiac spoke a few confidential words to her husband. They sat at the end of it, and the beauty of the night, so warm and still, induced them to linger. The bright moon sailed grandly in the heavens and glittered upon the water that now filled the harbour, for the tide was in. Most of the promenaders had turned down the pier again, after watching out the steamer. What a fine passage she would make, and was making, cutting there so smoothly through the crystal sea!

Mary Cardiac began in a low voice, though no one was near to listen and the waves could not hear her. She spoke pretty fully of a haunting doubt that lay upon her mind, as to whether Lavinia had died a natural death.

"If we make the best of it," she concluded, "her dying in that strangely sudden way was unusual; you know that, Jules; quite unaccountable. It never *has* been accounted for."

M. Jules, gazing on the gentle waves as they rose and fell in the moonlight at the mouth of the harbour, answered nothing.

"He had so much to wish her away for, that man: all the money would become Nancy's. And I'm sure there was secret enmity between them—on both sides. Don't you see, Jules, how suspicious it all looks?"

The moonbeams, illumining M. Jules Cardiac's face, showed it to be very impassive, betraying no indication that he as much as heard what his wife was talking about.

"I have not forgotten, I can never forget, Jules, the very singular Fate-reading, or whatever you may please to call it, spoken by the Astrologer Talcke last winter at Miss Bosanquet's soirée. You were not in the room, you know, but I related it to you when we arrived home. He certainly foretold Lavinia's death, as I, recalling the words, look upon it now. He said there was some element of evil in their house, threatening and terrible; he repeated it more than once.

In their house, Jules, and that it would end in darkness; which, as everyone understood, meant death: not for Mrs. Fennel; he took care to tell her that; but for another. He said the cards were more fateful than he had ever seen them. That evil in the house was Fennel."

Still M. Jules offered no comment.

"And what could be the meaning of those dreams Lavinia had of him, in which he always seemed to be preparing to inflict upon her some fearful ill, and she knew she never could and never would escape it?" ran on Mary Cardiac, her eager, suppressed tones bearing a gruesome sound in the stillness of the night. "And what is the explanation of the fits of terror which have shaken Fennel since the death, fancying he sees Lavinia? Flore said to me this morning that she is sure Lavinia is in the house."

Glancing at her husband to see that he was at the least listening, but receiving no confirmation of it by word or motion, Mary Cardiac continued.

"Those dreams came to warn her, Jules. To warn her to get out of the house while she could. And she made arrangements to go, and in another day or two would have been away in safety. But he was too quick for her."

M. Jules Cardiac turned now to face his wife. "Mon amie, tais toi," said he with authority. "Such a topic is not convenable," he added, still in French, though she had spoken in English. "It is dangerous."

"But, Jules, I believe it *to have been so.*"

"All the same, and whether or no, it is not your affair, Marie. Neither must you make it such. Believe me, my wife, the only way to live peaceably ourselves in the world is to let our neighbours' sins alone."

II.

Captain Edwin Fennel was certainly in no hurry to return to Sainteville, for he did not come. Nancy, ailing, weak, wretchedly uncomfortable, wrote letter after letter to him, generally sending them over by some friend or other, who might be crossing, to be put in a London letter-box, and so evade the foreign postage. Once or twice she had written to Mrs. James, telling of her lonely life and that she wanted Edwin either to take her out of the dark and desolate house, or else to come back to it himself. Captain Fennel would answer now and again, promising to come—she would be quite sure to see him on one of the first boats if she looked out for their arrival. Nancy did look, but she had not yet seen him. She was growing visibly thinner and weaker. Sainteville said how ill Mrs. Fennel was looking.

One evening at the end of July, when the London steamer was due about ten o'clock, Nancy went to watch it in, as usual, Flore attending her. The port was gay, crowded with promenaders. There had been a concert at the Rooms, and the company was

coming home from it. Mrs. Fennel had not made one: latterly she had felt no spirit for amusement. Several friends met her; she did not tell them she had come down to meet her husband, if haply he should be on the expected boat; she had grown tired and half ashamed of saying that; she let them think she was only out for a walk that fine evening. There was a yellow glow still in the sky where the sun had set; the north-west was clear and bright with its opal light.

The time went on; the port became deserted, except for a few passing stragglers. Ten o'clock had struck, eleven would soon strike. Flore and her mistress, tired of pacing about, sat down on one of the benches facing the harbour. One of two young men, passing swiftly homewards from the pier, found himself called to.

"Charley! Charley Palliser!"

Charles turned, and recognised Mrs. Fennel. Stepping across to her, he shook hands.

"What do you think can have become of the boat?" she asked. "It ought to have been in nearly an hour ago."

"Oh, it will be here shortly," he replied. "The boat often makes a slow passage when there's no wind. What little wind we have had to-day has been dead against it."

"As I've just said to madame," put in Flore, always ready to take up the conversation. "Mr. Charles knows there's no fear it has gone down, though it may be a bit late."

"Why, certainly not," laughed Charley. "Are you waiting here for it, Mrs. Fennel?"

"Ye—s," she answered, but with hesitation.

"And as it's not even in sight yet, madame had much better go home and not wait, for the air is getting chilly," again spoke Flore.

"We can't see whether it's in sight or not," said her mistress. "It is dark yonder out at sea."

"Shall I wait here with you, Mrs. Fennel?" asked Charley in his good nature.

"Oh, no, no; no, thank you," she answered quickly. "If it does not come in soon, we shall go home."

He wished them good-night, and went onwards. "She is hoping the boat may bring that mysterious brute, Fennel," remarked Charles to his companion.

"Brute, you call him?"

"He is no better than one, to leave his sick wife alone so long," responded Charles in hearty tones. "She has picked up an idea, I hear, that the house is haunted, and shakes in her shoes in it from morning till night."

The two watchers sat on, Flore grumbling. Not for herself, but for her mistress. A sea-fog was rising, and Flore thought madame might take cold. Mrs. Fennel wrapped her light fleecy shawl closer about her chest, and protested she was quite hot. The shawl was

well enough for a warm summer's night, but not for a cold sea-fog. About half-past eleven there suddenly loomed into view through the mist the lights of the steamer, about to enter the harbour.

"There she is!" exultingly cried Nancy, who had been shivering inwardly for some time past, and doing her best not to shiver outwardly for fear of Flore. "And now, Flore, you go home as quickly as you can and make a fire in the salon to warm us. I'm sure he will need one—at sea in this cold fog!"

"If he is come," mentally returned Flore in her derisive heart. She had no faith in the return of Monsieur Fennel by any boat, a day or a night one. But she needed no second prompting to hasten away; was too glad to do it.

Poor Nancy waited on. The steamer came very slowly up the port, or she fancied so; one must be cautious in a fog; and it seemed to her a long time swinging round and settling itself into its place. Then the passengers came on shore one by one, Nancy standing close to look at them. There were only about twenty in all, and Captain Fennel was not one of them. With misty eyes and a rising in her throat and spiritless footsteps, Nancy arrived at her home, the petite Maison Rouge. Flore had the fire burning in the salon; but Nancy was too thoroughly chilled for any salon fire to warm her.

The cold she caught that night struck to her chest. For some days afterwards she was very ill indeed. M. Dupuis attended her, and brought his son once or twice, M. Henri. Nancy got up again, and was, so to say, herself once more; but she did not get up her strength.

She would lie on the sofa in the salon those August days, which were very hot ones, too languid to get off it. Friends would call in to see her; Major and Mrs. Smith, the Miss Bosanquets, the Lamberts, and so on. Madame Cardiac was often there. They would ask her why she did not "make an effort" and sit up and occupy herself with a book or a bit of work, or go out a little; and Nancy's answer was nearly always the same—she would do all that when the weather was somewhat cooler. Charley Palliser was quite a constant visitor. An English damsel, who was casting a covetous eye to Charles, though she might have spared herself the pains, took a fit of jealousy and said one might think sick Nancy Fennel was his sweetheart, going there so often. Charley rarely went empty-handed either. Now it would be half-a-dozen nectarines in their ripe-red loveliness, now some choice peaches, then a bunch of hot-house grapes "purple and gushing," and again an amusing novel just out in England.

"Mary, she is surely dying!"

The sad exclamation came from Stella Featherston. She and Madame Cardiac, going in to take tea at the petite Maison Rouge,

had been sent by its mistress to her chamber above to take off their bonnets. The words had broken from Stella the moment they were alone.

"Sometimes I fear it myself," replied Madame Cardiac. "She certainly grows weaker instead of stronger."

"Does any doctor attend her?"

"M. Dupuis; a man of long experience, kind and clever. I was talking to him the other day, and he as good as said his skill and care seemed to avail nothing: was wasted on her."

"Is it consumption?"

"I think not. She caught a dreadful cold about a month ago, through being out in a night fog, thinly clad; and there's no doubt it left mischief behind; but it seems to me that she is wasting away with inward fever."

"I should get George to run over to see her if I were you, Mary," remarked Stella. "French doctors are very clever, I believe, especially as surgeons, but for an uncertain case like this they don't come up to the English. And George knows her constitution."

They went down to the salon, Mary Cardiac laughing a little at the remark. Stella Featherston had not been long enough in France to part with her native prejudices. The family with whom she lived in Paris had journeyed to Sainteville for a month for what they called "les eaux," and Stella accompanied them. They were in lodgings on the port.

Mrs. Fennel seemed more like her old self that evening than she had been for some time past. The unexpected presence of her companion of early days changed the tone of her mind and raised her spirits. Stella exerted all her mirth, talked of their doings in the past, told of Buttermead's doings in the present. Nancy was quite gay.

"Do you ever sing now, Stella?" she suddenly asked.

"Why, no," laughed Stella, "unless I am quite alone. Who would care to hear old ditties sung without music?"

"I should. Oh, Stella, sing me a few!" implored the invalid, her tone quite imploring. "It would bring the dear old days back to me."

Stella Featherston had a most melodious voice, but she did not play. It was not unusual in those days for girls to sing without any accompaniment, as Stella had for the most part done.

"Have you forgotten your Scotch songs, Stella?" asked Mary Cardiac.

"Not I; I like them best of all," replied Miss Featherston. And without more ado she broke into "Ye banks and braes."

It was followed by "The Banks of Allan Water" and others. Flore stole to the parlour door, and thought she had never heard so sweet a singer. Last of all, Stella began a quaint song that was more of a chant than anything else, low and subdued.

"Woe's me, for my heart is breakin',
I think on my brither sma',
And on my sister greetin',
When I cam' from home awa'.
And O, how my mither sobbit,
As she took from me my hand,
When I left the door of our old house
To come to this stranger land.

"There's nae place like our ain home,
O, I would that I were there!
There's nae home like our ain home
To be met wi' onywhere.
And O, that I were back again
To our farm and fields sae green,
And heard the tongues of our ain folk,
And was what I hae been!"

A feeling of despair ran through the whole words; and the tears were running down Ann Fennel's hectic cheeks as the melody died away in a plaintive silence.

"It is what I shall never see again, Stella," she murmured—"the green fields of *our* home; or hear the tongues of all the dear ones there. In my dreams, sometimes, I am at Selby Court, light-hearted and happy, as I was before I left it for this 'stranger land.' Woe's *me*, also, Stella!"

And now I come into the story; I, Johnny Ludlow. For what I have told of it hitherto has not been from any personal knowledge of mine, but from diaries, and from what Mary Cardiac related to me, and from Featherston. It may be regarded as singular that I should have been, so to say, present at its ending, but that I *was* there is as true as anything I ever wrote. The story itself is true in all its chief facts; I have already said that; and it is true that I saw the close of it.

III.

To say that George Featherston, Doctor-in-ordinary at Buttermead, felt as if he were standing on his head instead of his heels, would not in the least express his mental condition as he stood in his surgery that September afternoon and read a letter, just delivered, from his sister, Madame Cardiac.

"Wants me to go to Sainteville to see Ann Preen; thinks she will die if I refuse, for the French doctors can do nothing for her!" commented Featherston, staring at the letter in intense perplexity, and then looking off it to stare at me.

I wonder whether anything in this world happens by chance? In he days and years that have gone by since, I sometimes ask myself

whether *that* did: that I should be at that particular moment in Featherston's surgery. Squire Todhetley was staying with Sir John Whitney for partridge shooting. He had taken me with him, Tod being in Gloucestershire; and on this Friday afternoon I had run in to say How-d'ye-do to Featherston.

"*Sainteville!*" repeated he, quite unable to collect his senses. "Why, I must cross the water to go *there!*"

I laughed. "Did you think Sainteville would cross to you, sir?"

"Bless me! just listen to this," he went on, reading parts of the letter aloud for my benefit. "'It is a dreadful story, George; I dare not enter into details here. But I may tell you this much: that she is dying of fright as much as of fever—or whatever it may be that ails her physically. I am sure it is not consumption, though some of the people here think it is. It is fright and superstition. She lives in the belief that the house is haunted: that Lavinia's ghost walks in it.'

"Now what on earth can Mary mean by that?" demanded the doctor, looking off to ask me. "Ann Preen's wits must have left her. And Mary's, too, to repeat so nonsensical a thing."

Turning to the next page of the letter, Featherston read on.

"'To see her dying by inches before my eyes, and not make any attempt to save her, is what I cannot reconcile myself to, George. I should have it on my conscience afterwards. I think there is this one chance for her: that you, who have attended her before and must know her constitution, would see her now. You might be able to suggest some remedy or mode of treatment which would restore her. It might even be that the sight of a home face, of her old home doctor, would do for her what the strange doctors here cannot. No one knows better than you how marvellously in illness the mind influences the body.'

"True enough," broke off Featherston. "But it seems to me there must be something mysterious about this sickness." He read on again.

"'Stella, who is here, was the first to suggest your seeing her, but it was already exercising my thoughts. Do come, George! the sooner the better. I and Jules will be delighted to have you with us.'"

Featherston slowly folded up the letter. "What do you think of all this, Johnny Ludlow? Curious, is it not?"

"Very. Especially that hint about the house being haunted by the dead-and-gone Miss Preen."

"I have never heard clearly what it was Lavinia Preen died of," observed Featherston, leaving, doctor-like, the supernatural for the practical. "Except that she was seized with some sort of illness one day and died the next."

"But that's no reason why her ghost should walk. Is it?"

"Nancy's imagination," spoke Featherston slightingly. "She was always foolish and fanciful."

"Shall you go to Sainteville, Mr. Featherston?"

He gave his head a slow, dubious shake, but did not speak.

"Don't I wish such a chance were offered to me!"

Featherston sat down on a high stool, which stood before the physic shelves, to revolve the momentous question. And by the time he took over it, he seemed to find it a difficult task.

"One hardly likes to refuse the request, put as Mary writes it," remarked he presently. "Yet I don't see how I can go all the way over there; or how I could leave my patients here. What a temper some of them would be in!"

"They wouldn't die of it. It would be a rare holiday for you. Set you up in strength for a year to come."

"I've not had a holiday since that time at Pumpwater," he rejoined dreamily; "when I went over for a day or two to see poor John Whitney. You remember it, Johnny; you were there."

"Ay, I remember it."

"Not that this is a question of a holiday for me or no holiday, and I wonder you should put it so, Johnny Ludlow; it turns upon Ann Preen. Ann Fennel, that's to say. If I thought I *could* do her any good, and those French doctors can't, why I suppose I ought to make an effort to go."

"To be sure. Make one also to take me with you!"

"I daresay!" laughed Featherston. "What would the Squire say to that?"

"Bluster a bit, and then see it was the very thing for me, and ask what the cost would be. Mr. Featherston, I shall be ready to start when you are. Please let me go!"

Of course I said this half in jest. But it turned out to be earnest. Whether Featherston feared he might get lost if he crossed the sea alone, I can't say; but he said I might put the question to the Squire if I liked, and he would see him later and second it.

Featherston did another thing. He carried Mary Cardiac's letter that evening to Selby Court. Colonel Selby was staying with his brother for a week's shooting. Mr. Selby, a nervous valetudinarian, would not have gone out with a gun if bribed to it, but he invited his friends to do so. They had just finished dinner when Featherston arrived; the two brothers, and a short, dark, younger man with a rather keen but good-natured face and kindly dark eyes. He was introduced as Mr. David Preen, and turned out to be a cousin, more or less removed, of all the Preens and all the Selbys you have ever heard of, dead or living.

Featherston imparted his news to them, and showed his sister's letter. It was pronounced to be a very curious letter, and was read over more than once. Colonel Selby next told them what he knew and what he thought of Edwin Fennel: how he had persistently schemed to get the quarterly money of the two ladies into his own covetous hands, and what a shady sort of individual he was believed

to be. Mr. Selby, nervous at the best of times, let alone the worst, became painfully impressed: he seemed to fear poor Nancy was altogether in a hornet's nest, and gave an impulsive opinion that some one of the family ought to go over with Featherston to look into things.

"Lavinia can't have been murdered, can she?" cried he, his thoughts altogether confused; "murdered by that man for her share of the money? Why else should her ghost come back?"

"Don't make us laugh, Paul," said the Colonel to his brother. "Ghosts are all moonshine. There are no such things."

"I can tell you that there *are*, William," returned the elder. "Though mercifully the power to see them is accorded to very few mortals on earth. Can you go with Mr. Featherston to look into this strange business, William?"

"No," replied the Colonel, "I could not possibly spare the time. Neither should I care to do it. Any inquiry of that kind would be quite out of my line."

"I will go," quietly spoke David Preen.

"Do so, David," said Mr. Selby eagerly. "It shall cost you nothing, you know." By which little speech, Featherston gathered that Mr. David Preen was not more overdone with riches than were many of the other Preens.

"Look into it well, David. See the doctor who attended Lavinia; see all and everybody able to throw any light upon her death," urged Mr. Selby. "As to Ann, she was lamentably, foolishly blameable to marry as she did, but she must not be left at the villain's mercy now things have come to this pass."

To which Mr. David Preen nodded an emphatic assent.

The Squire gave in at last. Not to my pleading—he accused me of having lost my head only to think of it—but to Featherston. And when the following week was wearing away, the exigencies of Featherston's patients not releasing him sooner, we started for Sainteville; he, I, and David Preen. Getting in at ten at night after a boisterous passage, Featherston took up his quarters at M. Cardiac's, we ours at the Hôtel des Princes.

She looked very ill. Ill and changed. I had seen Ann Preen at Buttermead when she lived there, but the Ann Preen (or Fennel) I saw now was not much like her. The once bright face was now drawn and fallen in, and very nearly as long and grey as Featherston's. Apart from that, a timid, shrinking look sat upon it, as though she feared some terror lay very near to her.

The sick have to be studied, especially when suffering from whims and fancies. So they invented a little fable to Mrs. Fennel—that Featherston and David Preen were taking an excursion together for their recreation, and the doctor had extended it as far as Sainteville to see his sister Mary; never allowing her to think that it was to see

her. I was with them, but I went for nobody—and in truth that's all I was in the matter.

It was the forenoon of the day after we arrived. David Preen had gone in first, her kinsman and distant cousin, to the petite Maison Rouge, paving the way, as it were, for Featherston. We went in presently. Mrs. Fennel sat in a large arm-chair by the salon fire, wrapped in a grey shawl; she was always cold now, she told us; David Preen sat on the sofa opposite, talking pleasantly of home news. Featherston joined him on the sofa, and I sat down near the table.

Oh, she was glad to see us! Glad to see us all. Ours were home faces, you see. She held my hands in hers, and the tears ran down her face, betraying her state of weakness.

"You have not been very well of late, Mary tells me," Featherston said to her in a break of the conversation. "What has been the matter?"

"I—it came on from a bad cold I caught," she answered in some hesitation. "And there was all the trouble about Lavinia's death. I could not get over the grief."

"Well, I must say you don't look very robust," returned Featherston, in a half-joking tone. "I think I had better take you in hand while I am here, and set you up."

"I do not think you can set me up; I do not suppose anyone can," she replied, shaking back her curls, which fell on each side her face in ringlets as of old.

Featherston smiled cheerily. "I'll try," said he. "Some of my patients say the same when I am first called in to them; but they change their tone after I have brought back their roses. So will you; never fear. I'll come in this afternoon and have a professional chat with you."

That settled, they went on with Buttermead again; David Preen giving scraps and revelations of the Preen and Selby families; Featherston telling choice items of the rural public in general. Mrs. Fennel's spirits went up to animation.

"Shall you be able to do anything for her, sir?" I asked the Doctor as we came away and went through the entry to the Place Ronde.

"I cannot tell," he answered gravely. "She has a look on her face that I do not like to see there."

Betrayed into confidence, I suppose, by the presence of the old friend of her girlhood, Ann Fennel related everything to Mr. Featherston that afternoon, as they sat on the sofa side by side, her hand occasionally held soothingly in his own. He assured her plainly that what she was chiefly suffering from was a disorder of the nerves, and that she must state to him explicitly the circumstances which had brought it on before he could decide how to treat her for it.

Nancy obeyed him. She yearned to get well, though a latent

impression lay within her that she should not do so. She told him the particulars of Lavinia's unexpected death just when on the point of leaving Sainteville; and she went on to declare, glancing over her shoulders with frightened eyes, that she (Lavinia) had several times since then appeared in the house.

"What did Lavinia die of?" inquired the Doctor at this juncture.

"We could not tell," answered Mrs. Fennel. "It puzzled us. At first M. Dupuis thought it must be inflammation brought on by a chill; but M. Podevin quite put that opinion aside, saying it was nothing of the sort. He is a younger and more energetic practitioner than M. Dupuis."

"Was it never suggested that she might, in one way or another, have taken something which poisoned her?"

"Why, yes, it was; I believe M. Dupuis did think so; I am sure M. Podevin did. But it was impossible it could have been the case, you see, because Lavinia touched nothing either of the days that we did not also partake of."

"There ought to have been an examination after death. You objected to that, I fancy," continued Featherston, who had talked a little with Madame Cardiac.

"True; I did; and I have been sorry for it since," sighed Ann Fennel. "It was through what my husband said to me that I objected: Edwin thought it would be distasteful to me. He did not like the idea of it either. Being dead, he held that she should be left in reverence."

Featherston coughed. She was evidently innocent as any lamb of suspicion against *him.*

"And now," went on Mr. Featherston, "just tell me what you mean by saying you see your sister about the house."

"We do see her," said Nancy.

"Nonsense! You don't. It is all fancy. When the nerves are unstrung, as yours are, they play us all sorts of tricks. Why, I knew a man once who took up a notion that he walked upon his head, and he came to me to be cured!"

"But it is the seeing Lavinia's apparition, and the constant fear of seeing it which lies upon me, that has brought on this nervousness," pleaded Nancy. "It is to my husband, when he is here, that she chiefly appears; nothing but that is keeping him away. I have seen her only three or four times."

She spoke quietly and simply, evidently grounded in the belief. Mr. Featherston wondered how he was to deal with this: and perhaps he was not, himself, so much of a sceptic in the supernatural as he thought fit to pretend. Nancy continued.

"It was to my husband she appeared first. Exactly a week after her death. No; a week after the evening she was first taken ill. He was coming upstairs to bed; I had gone on; when he suddenly fancied that someone was following him, though only he and

I were in the house. Turning quickly round, he saw Lavinia. That was the first time; and I assure you I thought he would have died of it. Never before had I witnessed such mortal terror in man."

"Did he tell you he had seen her?"

"No; never. I could not imagine what brought on these curious attacks of fright, for he had others. He put it upon his health. It was only when I saw Lavinia myself after he went to England that I knew. I knew then what it must have been."

Mr. Featherston was silent.

"She always appears in the same dress," continued Nancy; "a silver-grey silk that she wore at church that Sunday. It was the last gown she ever put on: we took it off her when she was first seized with the pain. And in her face there is always a sad, beseeching aspect, as if she wanted something and were imploring us to get it for her. *Indeed* we see her, Mr. Featherston."

"Ah, well," he said, perceiving it was not from this quarter that light could be thrown on the suspicious darkness of the past, "let us talk of yourself. You are to obey my orders in all respects, Mistress Nancy. We will soon have you flourishing again."

Brave words. Perhaps the doctor half believed in them himself. But he and they received a check all too soon.

That same evening, after David Preen had left: for he went in to spend an hour at the little red house to gossip about the folks at home: Nancy was taken with a fit of shivering. Flore hastily mixed her a glass of hot wine and water, and then went upstairs to light a fire in the bedroom, thinking her mistress would be the better for it. Nancy, who could hear Flore moving about overhead, suddenly remembered something that she wanted brought down. Rising from her chair, she went to the door of the salon intending to call out. A sort of side light, dim and indistinct, fell upon her as she stood in the recess at the foot of the stairs, from the lamp in the salon and from the stove in the kitchen, for both doors were open.

"Flore," she was beginning, "will you bring down my ——"

And there Ann Fennel's words ended. With a wild cry, which reached the ears of Flore and nearly startled her into fits, Mrs. Fennel collapsed. The servant came dashing downstairs, expecting to hear that the ghost had appeared again.

It was not that. Her mistress was looking wild and puzzled; and when she recovered herself sufficiently to speak, declared that she had been startled by some animal. Either a cat or a rabbit, she could not tell which, the glimpse she caught of it was so brief and slight; it had run against her legs as she was calling out.

Flore did not know what to make of this. She looked about, but neither cat nor rabbit was to be seen; and she told her mistress it could have been nothing but fancy. Mrs. Fennel thought she knew better.

"Why, I felt it and saw it," she said. "It came right against me and ran over my feet. It seemed to be making for the passage, as if it wanted to get out by the front door."

We were gathered together in the salon of the petite Maison Rouge the following morning, partly by accident. Ann Fennel, exceedingly weak and nervous, lay in bed. Featherston and M. Dupuis were both upstairs. She put down her illness to the fright, which she talked of to them freely. They did not assure her it was only "nerves"—to what purpose? I waited in the salon with David Preen, and just as the doctors came down Madame Cardiac came in.

David Preen seized upon the opportunity. Fearing that one so favourable might not again occur, unless formally planned, he opened the ball. Drawing his chair to the table, next to that of Madame Cardiac, the two doctors sitting opposite, David Preen avowed, with straightforward candour, that he, with some other relatives, held a sort of doubt as to whether it might not have been something Miss Lavinia Preen took which caused her death; and he begged M. Dupuis to say if any such doubt had crossed his own mind at the time.

The fair-faced little médecin shook his head at this appeal, as much as to say he thought that the subject was a puzzling one. Naturally the doubt had crossed him, and very strongly, he answered; but the difficulty in assuming that view of the matter lay in her having partaken solely of the food which the rest of the household had partaken of; that and nothing else. His confrère, M. Podevin, held a very conclusive opinion—that she had died of poison.

David Preen drew towards him a writing-case which lay on the table, took a sheet of paper from it, and a pencil from his pocket. "Let us go over the facts quietly," said he; "it may be we shall arrive at some decision."

So they went over the facts, the chief speakers being Madame Cardiac and Flore, who was called in. David Preen dotted down from time to time something which I suppose particularly impressed him.

Miss Preen was in perfectly good health up to that Sunday—the first after Easter. On the following Tuesday she was about to quit Sainteville for Boulogne, her home at the petite Maison Rouge having become intolerable to her through the residence in it of Captain Fennel.

"Pardon me if I state here something which is not positively in the line of facts; rather, perhaps, in that of imagination," said Madame Cardiac, looking up. "Lavinia had gradually acquired a most painful dread of Captain Fennel. She had dreams which she could only believe came to warn her against him, in which he appeared to be threatening her with some evil that she could not escape from. Once or twice—and this I cannot in any way account

for—she saw him in the house when he was not in it, not even at Sainteville ——"

"What! saw his apparition?" cried Featherston. "When the man was living! Come, come, Mary, that is going too far!"

"Quelle drôle d'idée!" exclaimed the little doctor.

"He appeared to her twice, she told me," continued Mary Cardiac. "She had been spending the evening out each time, had come into the house, this house, closing the street-door behind her. When she lighted a candle at the slab, she saw him standing just inside the door, gazing at her with the same dreadful aspect that she saw afterwards in her dreams. You may laugh, George; M. Dupuis, I think you are already laughing; but I fully believe that she saw what she said she did, and dreamt what she did dream."

"But it could not have been the man's apparition when he was not dead; and it could not have been the man himself when he was not at Sainteville," contended Featherston.

"And I believe that it all meant one of those mysterious warnings which are vouchsafed us from our spiritual guardians in the unseen world," added Madame Cardiac, independently pursuing her argument. "And that it came to Lavinia to warn her to escape from this evil house."

"And she did not do it," remarked David Preen. "She was not quick enough. Well, let us go on."

"As Lavinia came out of church, Charles Palliser ran after her to ask her to go home to dine with him and his aunt," resumed Madame Cardiac. "If she had only accepted it! The dinner here was a very simple one, and they all partook of it, including Flore ——"

"And it was Flore who cooked and served it?" interrupted David Preen, looking at her.

"Mais oui, monsieur. The tart excepted; that was frangipane, and did come from the pastrycook," added Flore, plunging into English. "Then I had my own dinner, and I had of every dish; and I drank of the wine. Miss Lavinia would give me a glass of wine on the Sunday, and she poured it out for me herself that day from the bottle of Bordeaux on their own table. Nothing was the matter with any of all that. The one thing I did not have of was the liqueur."

"What liqueur was that?"

"It was chartreuse, I believe," said Flore. "While I was busy removing the dinner articles from the salon, monsieur was busy at his cupboard outside there, where he kept his bottles. He came into the kitchen just as I had sat down to eat, and asked me for three liqueur glasses, which I gave to him on a plate. I heard him pour the liqueur into them, and he carried them to the ladies."

Mr. David Preen wrote something down here.

"After that the Captain went out to walk, saying he would see the English boat enter; and when I had finished washing up I carried

the tea-tray to the salon table and went home. Miss Lavinia was quite well then; she sat in her belle robe of grey silk talking with her sister. Then, when I was giving my boy, Dion, his collation, a tartine and a cooked apple, I was fetched back here, and found the poor lady fighting with pain for her life."

"Did you wash those liqueur glasses?" asked Mr. Featherston.

"But yes, sir. I had taken them away when I carried in the tea-things, and washed them at once, and put them on the shelf in their places."

"You see," observed M. Dupuis, "the ill-fated lady appears to have taken nothing that the others did not take also. I applied my remedies when I was called to her, and the following day she had, as I believed, recovered from the attack; nothing but the exhaustion left by the agony was remaining. But that night she was again seized, and I was again fetched to her. The attack was even more violent than the first one. I made a request for another doctor, and M. Podevin was brought. He at once set aside my suggestion of inflammation from a chill, and said it looked to him more like a case of poison."

"She had had nothing but slops that day, messieurs, which I made and carried to her," put in Flore; "and when I left, at night, she was, as M. le Médecin puts it, 'all well to look at.'"

"Flore did not make the arrowroot which she took later," said Mary Cardiac, taking up the narrative. "When Lavinia went up to bed, towards nine o'clock, Mrs. Fennel made her a cup of arrowroot in the kitchen——"

"And a cup for herself at the same time, as I was informed madame," spoke the little doctor.

"Oh, yes, I know that, M. Dupuis. Mrs. Fennel brought her sister's arrowroot, when it was ready, into this room, asking her husband whether she might venture to put a little brandy into it. He sent her to ask the question of Lavinia, bidding her leave the arrowroot on the table here. She came down for it, saying Lavinia declined the brandy, carried it up to her and saw her take it. Mrs. Fennel wished her good-night and came down for her own portion, which she had left in the kitchen. Before eleven o'clock, when they were going to bed, cries were heard in Lavinia's room; she was seized with the second attack, and—and died in it."

"This second attack was so violent, so unmanageable," said M. Dupuis, as Mary Cardiac's voice faltered into silence, "that I feel convinced I could not have saved her had I been present when it came on. I hear that Captain Fennel says he rang several times at my door before he could arouse me. Such was not the case. I am a very light sleeper, waking, from habit, at the slightest sound. But in this case I had not had time to fall asleep, when I fancied I heard the bell sound very faintly. I thought I must be mistaken, as the bell is a loud bell, and rings easily; and people who ring me up

at night generally ring pretty sharply. I lay listening, and some time afterwards, not immediately, it did ring. I opened my window, saw Captain Fennel outside, and was dressed and with him in two minutes."

"That sounds as if he did not want you to go to her too quickly, monsieur," observed Mr. Featherston, which went, as the French have it, without saying. "And I have heard of another suspicious fact: that he put his wife up to stop the medical examination after death."

"It amounts to this," spoke David Preen, "according to our judgment, if anything wrong was administered to her, it was given in the glass of liqueur on the Sunday afternoon, and in the cup of arrowroot on the Monday evening. They were the only things affording an opportunity of being tampered with; and in each case the pain came on about two hours afterwards."

Grave suspicion, as I am sure they all felt it to be. But not enough, as Featherston remarked, to accuse a man of murder. There was no proof to be brought forward, especially now that months had elapsed.

"What became of the cup which had contained the arrowroot?" inquired David Preen, looking at Flore. "Was it left in the bedroom?"

"That cup, sir, I found in a bowl of water in the kitchen, and also the other one which had been used. The two were together in the wooden bowl. I supposed Madame Fennel had put them there; but she said she had not."

"Ah!" exclaimed David Preen, drawing a deep breath.

He had come over to look into this suspicious matter; but, as it seemed, nothing could be done. To stir in it, and fail, would be worse than letting it alone.

"Look you," said David Preen, as he put up his note-book. "If it be true that Lavinia cannot rest now she's dead, but shows herself here in the house, I regard it as a pretty sure proof that she was sent out of the world unjustly. But——"

"Then you hold the belief that spirits revisit the earth, monsieur," interrupted M. Dupuis; "and that revenants are to be seen?"

"I do, sir," replied David. "We Preens see them. But I cannot stir in this matter, I was about to say, and the man must be left to his conscience."

And so the conference broke up.

The thing which lay chiefly on hand now was to try to bring health back to Ann Fennel. It was thought well to take her out of the house for a short time, as she had such fancies about it; so Featherston gave up his room at Madame Cardiac's, and Ann was invited to move into it, whilst he joined us at the hotel. I thought her very ill, as we all did. But after her removal there, she recovered her spirits

wonderfully, and went out for short walks and laughed and chatted; and when Featherston and David Preen took the boat back to return home, she went to the port to see them steam off.

"Will it be all right with her?" was the last question Mary Cardiac whispered to her brother.

"I'm afraid *not*," he answered. "A little time will show, one way or the other. Depends somewhat, perhaps, upon how that husband of hers allows things to go on. I have done what I can, Mary; I could not do more."

Does the reader notice that I did not include myself in those who steamed off? For I did not go. Good, genial little Jules Cardiac, who was pleased to say he had always liked me much at school, invited me to make a stay at his house, if I did not mind putting up with a small bedroom in the mansarde. I did not mind it at all; it was large enough for me. Nancy was delighted. We had quite a gay time of it; and I made the acquaintance of Major and Mrs. Smith, the Misses Bosanquet and Charley Palliser, who was shortly to quit Sainteville. Charley's impression of Mrs. Fennel was that she would quit it before he did, but in a different manner.

One fine afternoon, when we were coming off the pier, Nancy walking between me and Mary Cardiac, for she needed the support of two arms if she went far—yes, she was as weak as that—someone called out that the London boat was coming in. Turning round, we saw her gliding smoothly up the harbour. No one in these Anglo-French towns willingly misses *that* sight, and we drew up on the quay to watch the passengers land. There were only eight or ten of them.

Suddenly Nancy gave a great cry, which bore a sound both of fear and of gladness—"Oh, there's Edwin!"—and the next moment began to shake her pocket-handkerchief frantically.

A thin, grey weasel of a man, whose face I did not like, came stalking up the ladder. Yes, it was the ex-captain, Edwin Fennel.

"He has not come for her sake; he has come to grab the quarter's money," spoke Mary, quite savagely, in my ear. No doubt. It would be due the end of September, which was quite at hand.

The Captain was elaborately polite; quite effusive in his greeting to us. Nancy left us and took his arm. At the turning where we had to branch off to the Rue de la Pomme Cuite, she halted to say good-bye.

"But you are coming back to us, are you not?" cried Madame Cardiac to her.

"Oh, I could not let Edwin go home alone," said she. "Nobody's there but Flore, you know."

So she went back there and then to the petite Maison Rouge, and never came out of it again. I think he was kind to her, that man. He had sometimes a scared look upon his face, and I guessed he had been seeing sights. The man would have given his head

to be off again; to remain in that haunted house must have been to him a most intolerable penance; but he had some regard (policy dictating it) for public opinion, and could not well run away from his wife in her failing health.

It was curious how quickly Nancy declined. From the very afternoon she entered the house it seemed to begin. He had grabbed the money, as Mary Cardiac called it, and brought her nice and nourishing things; but nothing availed. And a fine way he must have been in, to see that; for with his wife's death the money would go away from him for evermore.

M. Dupuis, sometimes M. Henry Dupuis, saw her daily; and Captain Fennel hastily called in another doctor who had the reputation of being the best in the town, next to M. Podevin; one M. Lamirand. Mary Cardiac spent half her time there; I went in most days. It could not be said that she had any special complaint, but she was too weak to live.

In less than three weeks it was all over. The end when it came was quite sudden. For a day or two she had seemed so much better that we told her she had taken a turn at last. On the Thursday evening, quite late, it was between eight and nine o'clock, Madame Cardiac asked me to run there with some jelly which she had made, and which was only then ready. When I arrived, Flore said she was sure her mistress would like me to go up to her room; she was alone, monsieur having stepped out.

Nancy, wrapped in a warm dressing-gown, sat by the fire in an easy-chair and a great shawl. Her fair curls were all put back under a small lace cap, which was tied at the chin with grey ribbon; her pretty blue eyes were bright. I told her what I had come for, and took the chair in front of her.

"You look so well this evening, Nancy," I said heartily—for I had learnt to call her so at Madame Cardiac's, as they did. "We shall have you getting well now all one way."

"It is the spurt of the candle before going out," she quietly answered. "I have not the least pain left anywhere—but it is only that."

"You should not say or think so."

"But I know it; I cannot mistake my own feelings. Fancy anyone, reduced as I am, getting well again!"

I am a bad one to keep up "make-believes." Truth to say, I felt as sure of it as she did.

"And it will not be very long first. Johnny," she went on, in a half-whisper, "I saw Lavinia to-day."

I looked at her, but made no reply.

"I have never seen her since I came back here. Edwin has, though; I am sure of it. This afternoon at dusk I woke up out of a doze, for getting up to sit here quite exhausts me, and I was moving forward to touch the hand-bell on the table there, to let

Flore know I was ready for my tea, when I saw Lavinia. She was standing over there, just in the firelight. I thought she seemed to be holding out her hand to me, as if inviting me to go to her, and on her face there was the sweetest smile of welcome; sweeter than could be seen on any face in life. All the sad, mournful, beseeching look had left it. She stood there for about a minute, and then vanished."

"Were you very much frightened?"

"I had not a thought of fear, Johnny. It was the contrary. She looked radiantly happy; and it somehow imparted happiness to me. I think—I think," added Nancy impressively, though with some hesitation, "that she came to let me know I am going to her. I believe I have seen her for the last time. The house has, also, I fancy; she and I will shortly go out of it together."

What could I answer to that?

"And so it is at last over," she murmured, more to herself than to me. "Very nearly over. The distress and the doubt, the terror and the pain. *I* brought it all on; you know that, Johnny Ludlow. I feel sure now that she has pardoned me. I humbly hope that God has."

She caught up her breath with a long drawn sigh.

"And you will give my dear love to all the old friends in England, Johnny, beginning with Mr. Featherston; he has been very kind to me; you will see them again, but I shall not. Not in this life. But we shall be together in the Life which has no ending."

At twelve o'clock that night Nancy Fennel died. At least, it was as near twelve as could be told. Just after that hour Flore went into the room, preparatory to sitting up with her, and found her dead—just expired, apparently—with a sweet smile on her face, and one hand stretched out as if in greeting. Perhaps Lavinia had come to greet her.

We followed her to the grave on Saturday. Captain Fennel walked next the coffin—and I wondered how he liked it. I was close behind him with M. Cardiac. Charley Palliser came next with little Monsieur le Docteur Dupuis and M. Gustave Sauvage. And we left Nancy in the cemetery side by side with her sister.

Captain Edwin Fennel disappeared. On the Sunday, when we English were looking for him in church, he did not come—his grief not allowing him, said some of the ladies. But an English clerk in the broker's office, hearing this, told another tale. Fennel had gone off by the boat which left the port for London the previous night at midnight.

And he did not come back again. He had left sundry debts behind him, including that owing to Madame Veuve Sauvage. M. Cardiac, later, undertook the payment of these at the request of Colonel Selby. It was understood that Captain Edwin Fennel had

emigrated to South America. If he had any conscience at all, it was to be hoped he carried it with him. He did not carry the money. The poor little income which he had schemed for, and perhaps worse, went back to the Selbys.

And that is the story. It is a curious history, and painful in more ways than one. But I repeat that it is true.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

TO ONE DEAD.

WHEN you were tired and went away,
I said, amid my new heart-ache,
"When I catch breath from pain, some day,
I will teach grief a worthier way,
And make a great song for his sake!"

Yet there is silence. O my friend,
You gave me love such years ago—
A child who could not comprehend
Its worth, yet kept it to the end—
How can I sing when you lie low?

Not always silence. O my dear,
Not when the empty heart and hand
Reach out for you, who are not near.
If you could see, if you could hear,
I think that you would understand.

The grief that can get leave to run
In channels smooth of tender song,
Wins solace mine has never won.
I have left all my work undone,
And only dragged my grief along.

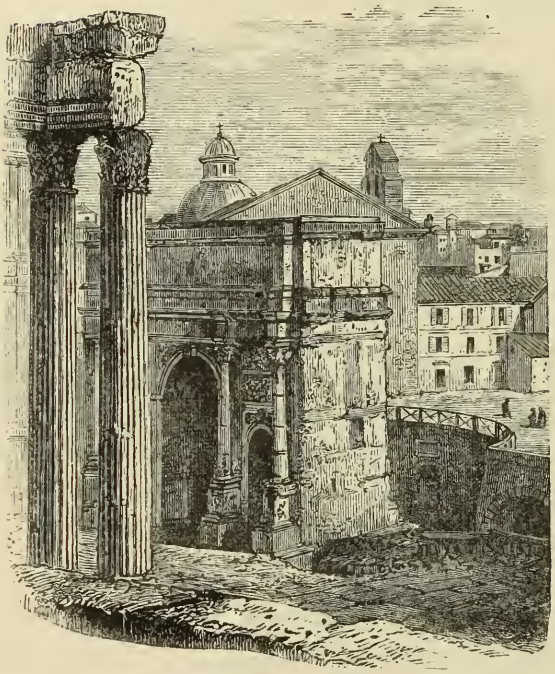
Many who loved you many years
(Not more than I shall always do),
Will breathe their songs in your dead ears;
God help them if they weep such tears
As I—who have no song for you.

You would forgive me, if you knew!
Silence is all I have to bring;
Where tears are many words are few;
I have but tears to bring to you;
For since you died I cannot sing!

E. NESBIT.

"ECCO ROMA!"

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.



The Forum.

IT has been said that the outward form is the index to the inner man. If we are to believe Lavater, this is, to a great extent, true. We mould our own characters, just as we choose our own friends. An habitual living of the higher life will bring forth the higher type. The tendency is progressive in this as in all other things, if we allow nature her free and healthy course. There is the other side of the picture, of course, and the downward way, with the inevitable result. So, with the evidence of our senses and experience, we need not go to the great physiognomist for the simple results of cause and effect. When, in obedience to the Divine law, "a life for a life," a criminal forfeits his existence, he generally possesses sufficient physical evidence of the wisdom of the decree. On the other hand, we can only associate beauty of form with gracefulness of spirit. This also is so far true that where we see beauty and repose in old age, we may write it down as a certainty that the previous life has been pure, lovely, and of good report. So comparative physiognomy is one of the most interesting of studies, and perhaps one of the saddest; more instructive than the finest sermon that ever was written.

This fine prelude has been inspired by the feeling that nature herself seems to bear out this fact in her physical geography. The most romantic countries have had the most thrilling of histories Italy, with her beautiful sea coast, her exquisite hills and valleys, her luxuriant plains watered by silver streams, also possesses the most romantic of records. The history of Rome or of Venice would alone immortalise Italy for all time, and throw around her that halo o

distinction which raises all who possess it above the ordinary level of mankind.

Nothing can be more beautiful and diversified than Italy. As you wander under those sunny skies from north to south, you feel, day by day and moment by moment, that you are in an earthly paradise. Every feature, from the magnificent and sublime to the calm and gentle, may be found here. Her mountain ways are grand beyond description. They who have gone down through the Alps to the plains of Lombardy, can never forget the emotions awakened by these glorious passes. At sunset the hills are flushed with crimson; the skies are ablaze with gorgeous colouring; the sun sinks to rest in a canopy of gold. The mountains recede, and darkness falls upon these rich plains of Lombardy; the flush of sunset quickly fades and leaves you nothing but gigantic outlines. But in a few hours the sun rises again, and all the vision is repeated.

Again, in the valley of the Dora Baltea, you have all the wealth of colouring which belongs specially to Italy, combined with all the grandeur of Switzerland, all the romance of the Tyrol. You have also all the beauty and richness of lake scenery. In the Lower valley of the Po you see the most amazing luxuriance of vegetation, and this again is repeated in the valley of the Arno.

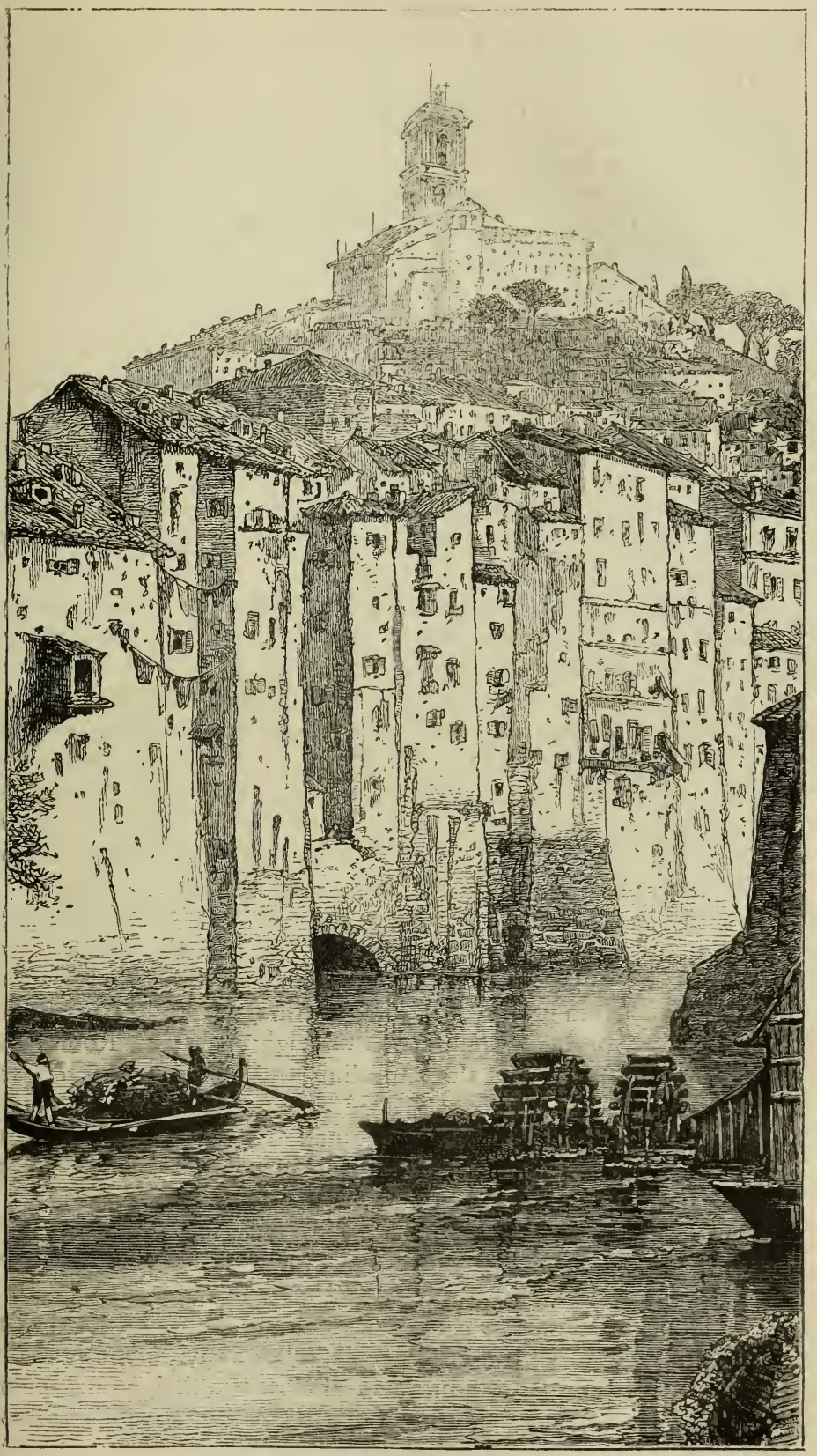
If you go to the sea coast, its beauty is unrivalled. The rich colouring of the Maritime Alps, the warm red sandstone contrasted with the green and grey of the abundant vegetation, blending so wonderfully with the matchless blue of the sky, form a picture which dazzles the imagination and bewilders the senses, and mocks all powers of description.

Never can I forget the first time that I saw the sea coast lying between Nice and Genoa. It remained then, it has remained ever since, as a vision. The express train hurried onwards so swiftly that the scene seemed to change as the pictures in a phantasmagoria. The coast was so diversified in outline, so broken and rugged—point after point, bay after bay approaching and receding, that everything appeared and disappeared with breathless rapidity.

When all was over, I seemed to have passed spiritually rather than materially through visions that belonged to a higher region than ours. The effect was not all delight. So rapid had been the experience, so vanishing the scenes, that the mind was left with the vague, confused feeling one has on awakening from a half-remembered dream.

And here, in writing of Rome, we find our contrast. The Eternal City possesses no sublime scenery to awaken its emotions within you. The surrounding Campagna is amongst the least fertile, least beautiful of all the Italian plains. To render it attractive, its river needs the pomp of pageantry, for which it was once so famous; its low levels need the excitement of conquering armies marching onward with shields and helmets gleaming in the sunshine. And so seen by the help of imagination, it will still remain interesting and absorbing

TEMPLE OF VESTA.



CAPITOLINE HILL.

above all other plains and rivers to the end of time. The seven hills of Rome will ever retain the charm they owe to the past: greatest of all charms, because saddest and most pathetic. The distant Apennines on the one hand, the beautiful Alban hills on the other, will never lose the interest that is theirs by virtue of their having looked down upon all the scenes of Rome's ancient grandeur. These hills and valleys echo and re-echo the word Ichabod! Ichabod! Its glory has departed; its sun has set; but the afterglow is miraculous, for it will never fade.

Whence first came these Romans?

Their origin is doubtful; but like much else that is great, they appear to have sprung from the East. Yet there is no absolute certainty about this. Like the origin and history of the Etruscans, much remains shrouded in mystery. There is internal evidence that the Romans sprang from a Sabine tribe, until, in the course of time, the Sabine language and characteristics died out, and Rome, becoming merged in her own absolute individuality, rose up a law unto herself; a distinct and mighty nation.

We are all familiar with its earliest traditions. The story of Romulus and Remus we almost learned with our cradle songs. How they sprang from a Vestal Virgin, the niece of Amulius; how she was buried alive, and they were thrown into the Tiber. How the Tiber had overflowed its banks, and, the waters receding, the twins were left upon dry ground. We know the story of the wolf that suckled them and the woodpecker that fed them; that, thus miraculously preserved, they were found by Faustulus, and taken home to his wife, Acca Laurentia. Here they were called Romulus and Remus, and grew up in the herdsman's cottage.

In time there came contention between the herdsmen of the Palatine Hill and those of the Aventine. Remus was taken prisoner, and Romulus went up to ransom him. Their fine forms betrayed their origin. Amulius was still king of Alba, but he had usurped the throne, for his brother Numitor was the rightful king. Romulus and Remus now attacked and slew Amulius, and Numitor succeeded to the throne of Alba.

The brothers now left Alba, and founded a new town on the banks of the Tiber. Upon this subject they disagreed. One wished to build upon the Palatine hill, the other upon the Aventine. In a last quarrel, Remus was accidentally slain, and one would think that remorse would haunt Romulus for ever after. But a more comfortable legend says that Romulus and Remus merely separated, and each built his own city. Romulus founding Rome on the Palatine, and Remus Remuria, on a hill three miles away. One prefers this legend—the hope that two brothers so closely allied, so miraculously preserved, so fine in form, and so noble in spirit, should remain firm friends and companions to the end of their lives.

So Romulus built his city on the Palatine hill 753 years before the

birth of Christ. To people it he made it a City of Refuge. All who had shed blood, or had otherwise committed evil, were safe here from pursuit. Runaway slaves received their freedom. This was hardly the way to obtain a noble population, but no doubt, under such conditions, it increased rapidly. The difficulty to be solved was, how to obtain wives for this army of bachelors; for those who had wives had left them behind them, and those who had none, would of course desire to take their chance in the great lottery of life. It was a City of Refuge for men, not for women. The latter were not supposed to need a refuge; they neither committed murder, nor otherwise made themselves notorious.

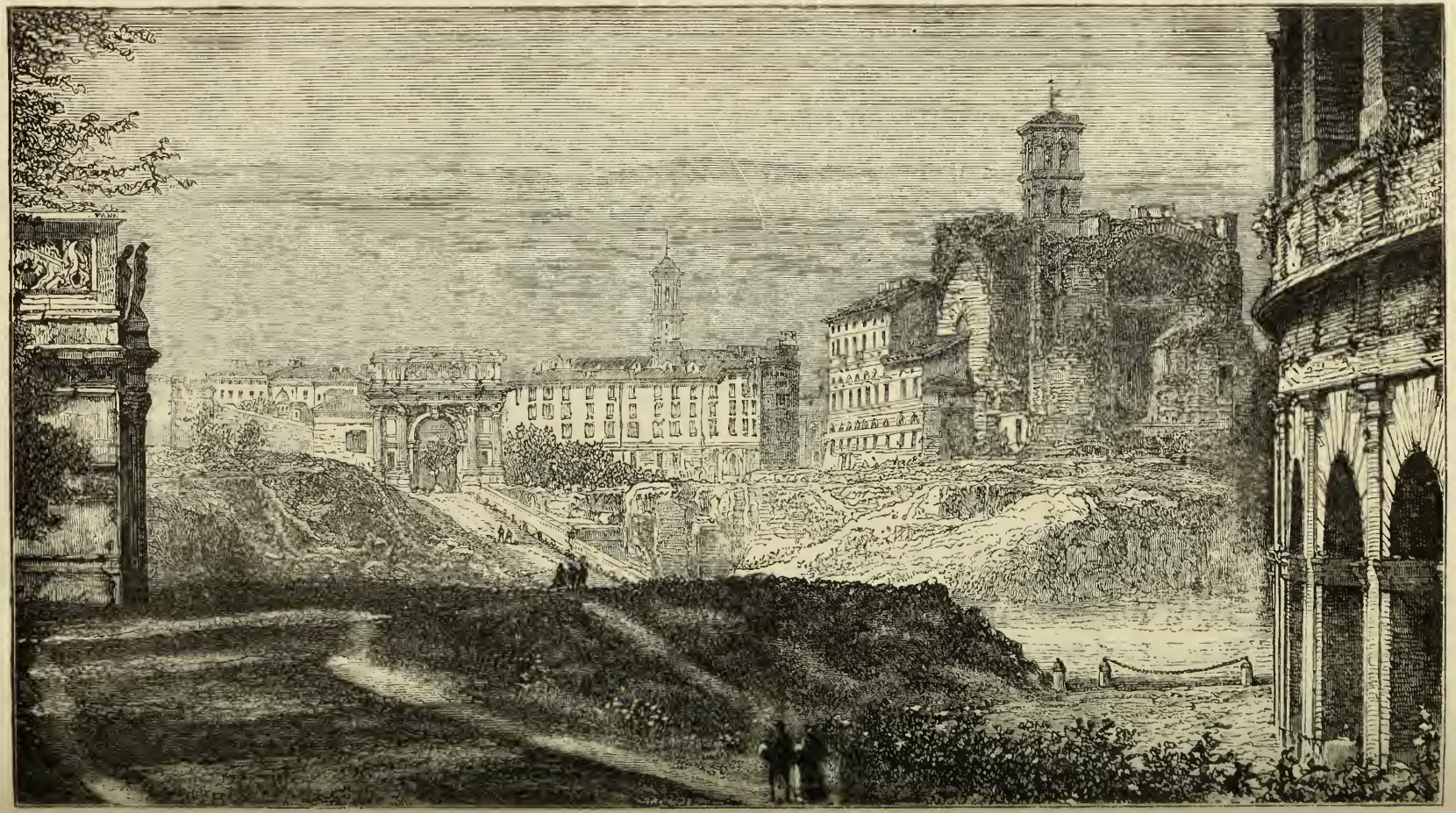
No one wanted these ex-criminals for husbands, and what was to be done? Romulus one day invited the Sabines to witness the games about to be held in honour of Consus, and whilst these were going on the Roman youths rushed in, seized all the maidens present, and carried them away by force. This was the celebrated Rape of the Sabines, which has since furnished the world with themes for song and scenes for canvas.

The Romans made good husbands, and the wives obtained by force were very happy, and asked for nothing better than to remain of their own free will. But wars followed the act, and there was no peace between the nations. We all know the story of the war with the Sabines: of the faithful Tarpeius and his daughter, the fair and faithless Tarpeia. How she promised to admit the Sabines into the citadel on the Saturnian Hill, if they would give her what they wore on their left arms—meaning their golden armlets. But when she opened the gates, the soldiers chose to put a different interpretation upon her demand; they also wore their shields upon the left arm, and these they threw upon her and killed her. And so the southern portion of the hill—since called the Capitoline—was for ever after called the Tarpeian Rock.

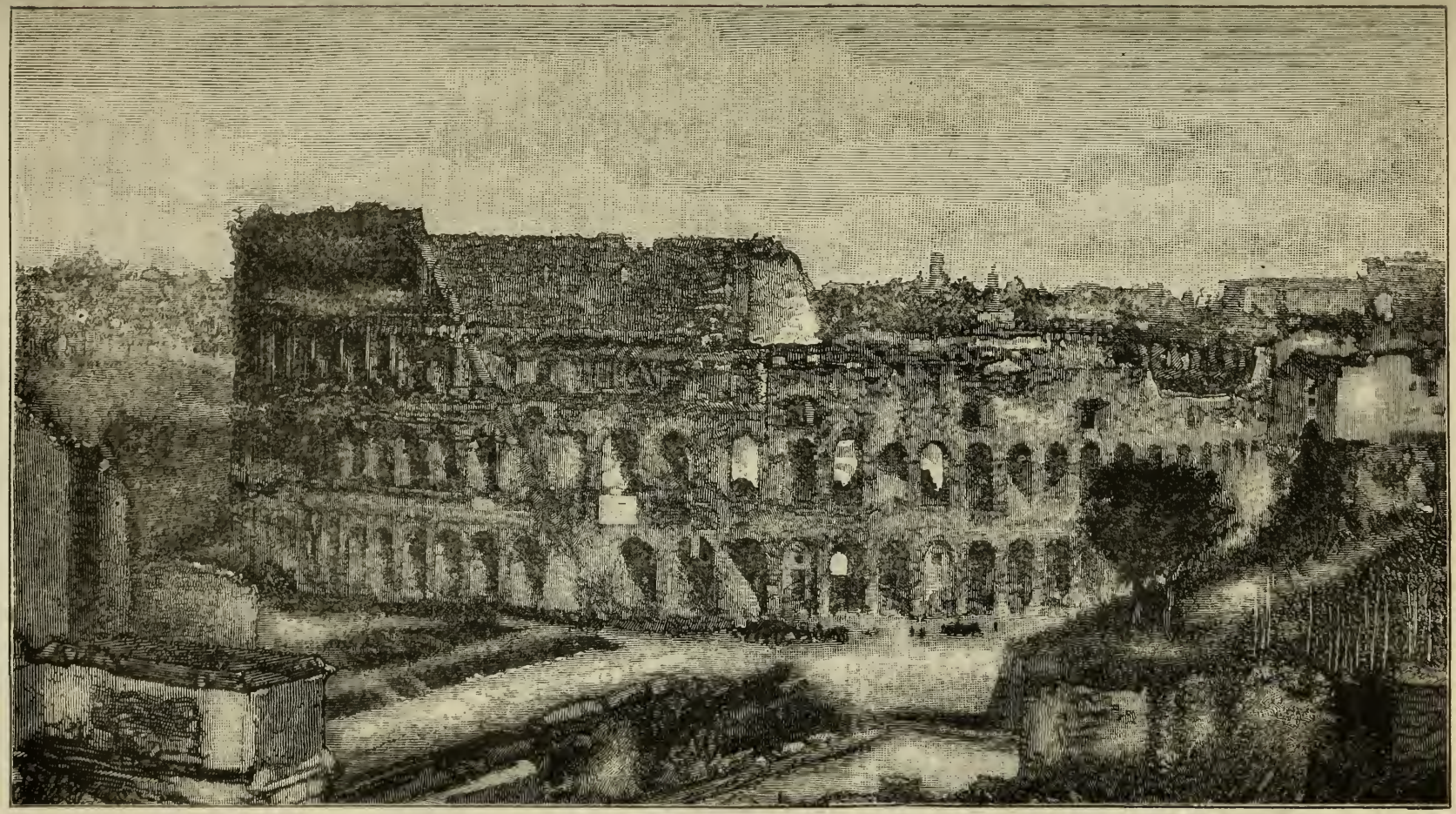
And still the wars raged. And one famous day when the Romans were sore pressed, and Romulus had appealed in vain to Jupiter Stator, and the battle seemed going against them, the Sabine women rushed down from the Palatine and threw themselves between the two armies. This naturally created confusion, for the women belonged equally to the Sabines and the Romans. There was nothing for it but to order a truce. The battle was stayed and peace was arranged, old feuds were forgotten, injuries forgiven, enemies became friends. In memory of the brave Sabine-Roman matrons, a festival called the Matronalia was instituted and celebrated every year on the Calends of March—the New Year's Day of the Romans of that period.

Time went on and brought its changes and vicissitudes. Amongst them Titus Tatius, the Sabine king, was killed at Lavinium, and Romulus succeeded him.

Romulus is said to have reigned thirty-seven years, and on the whole to have been a very good king "according to his lights:" the times



THE FORUM.



THE COLISEUM.

he lived in, the difficulties he had to encounter, the courage with which he fought in battle, the success which generally attended him, and the wisdom with which he ruled.

The manner of his death is as mysterious and mythological as the story of his birth and breeding.

When reviewing his army on the Field of Mars, a storm arose, and the darkness was so great that the soldiers could not see each other. During the darkness Romulus was carried off by Mars in his chariot. He appeared subsequently to a soldier who was returning from Alba, and declared that he and Mars would henceforth become joint guardians of Rome, and that he was to be worshipped under his Sabine name of Quirinus.

Another legend less miraculously ascribes his end to murder by the Sabine nobles during the darkness of the storm. So Romulus died, or disappeared in a chariot, and after a time Numa Pompilius reigned in his stead. And thus the kingdom, which was afterwards to subdue all Italy and become mistress of the civilised world, was founded.

To appreciate Rome as she now stands, one must know her history intimately. One ought to be familiar with the story of every monument and ruin before seeing the thing itself. In this light, a visit to Rome will be one of the most interesting events of your life. Without this knowledge, on the contrary, you will be convicted of ignorance at every step; the very romance and atmosphere of Rome will dissolve and evaporate. You will be chasing a will o' the wisp; seeking after sensations and emotions which will ever elude your grasp, and end in a certain humiliation and defeat: the consciousness that there is a world, a history, an atmosphere breathing around you from which you are shut out, in which you have neither part nor lot.

Fortunately it is in everyone's power to avoid this, at least to some extent. Without wading through ponderous volumes, you may take up short histories in which you will find the essence and spirit of your subject. There are many books which are not merely histories: they are romances, of which Rome and the Romans have been made the theme: so captivating that they enchain the imagination and accomplish all that is necessary to bring the mind into harmony with the Eternal City, her surroundings, her atmosphere, the very life which still actually seems to breathe in her very ruins, the very stones of her Sacred Way. There are two Romes: Pagan Rome and Christian Rome; and it would be difficult to say which is the more interesting and the more absorbing.

Mauleverer was of those whose practical minds require the support and reality of facts to arouse them to unusual interest. A mere romance, however thrilling, however beautiful, was lost upon him. His imagination was not sufficiently vivid to appreciate the realms of fiction; and after a perfect prose idyl, expecting to see a gleam in the eye and a flush on the cheek, one has been horrified and "thrown

back upon oneself" by the remark, laughingly and lightly made, it is true: "It is only a story after all."

But history was his delight, his world of romance. Its martial deeds would awaken him to enthusiasm, its grander records he would call sublime. His glance would kindle at the smallest act of heroism; whilst, on the other hand, the splendid description of a Waverley going to execution, told with all the force of Scott's graphic power, would fail to move him in the slightest degree.

The History of Rome was, fortunately, one of his pet subjects. It was a perfect delight to move about the streets, gaze upon the ruins, stand upon one of the seven hills, overlook the Campagna, watch the flowing Tiber, or tread the Appian Way, with one who knew the very stones of the place, the history of every broken pillar, the date and origin of every monument, every vicissitude through which it had passed. He seemed to bring back life from the dead and clothe the ruins with all their ancient glory. Hearing him speak, you once more saw the sacred fire burning in the Temple of Vesta; heard the shouts of the spectators watching the bull fights in the arena; saw Cæsar, laurel-crowned, making a triumphant progress in his chariot; heard the closing doors of the Temple of Janus in token that all the world was at peace. In all this he could be rapid, eloquent, and to the point, fired with enthusiasm, untiring in his walks, fervent in his moods. Even our little guide, Rossi, quaintly remarked, with a half comical, half regretful expression: "I am not wanted here. Sir Mauleverer knows Rome better than I do. I had better bid you good-day and retire. Othello's occupation is gone."

Not that we needed a guide. We both knew as much about Rome as Rossi could tell us, and probably more, as he had said. But if we knew as much or more about Ancient Rome, he, en revanche, was better acquainted with the modern city and could initiate us into all its mysteries, if mysteries there were.

For Rome, like a great public school, has its modern and its classical side. Rossi knew all the best shops; exactly where to go for everything; all the new twists and turnings; all the short cuts between one spot and another. He was acquainted with the best restaurants; and once, being athirst, he conducted us to a garden, where green bowers were cunningly arranged, and a temple in a corner was devoted to Terpsichore and Apollo. It was very modern, very French, very bearable at midday; but would be very unlike Rome when night fell, and the gas flared, and the tables were crowded, and noise and laughter went round, and the light-footed goddess was being serenaded.

"Can you fancy yourself in Rome?" cried Mauleverer, looking around upon what might have been the arena of a French café-chantant. "Let us come here to-night," he went on, with malice intent. "Let us come, that we may have our teeth set on edge; that we may see how the mighty are fallen; that the blue skies of

Rome, her moonlit nights, her refined and eternal ruins, the great heritage of her past, are absolutely lost upon her people. A prophet has no honour in his own country. It is the old story of familiarity breeding contempt. If angels came down to raise men heavenwards, they would not do it. Custom stales the most infinite variety."

As he spoke, a group of Frenchwomen crossed the garden, loud and laughing, mounted the platform, and began rehearsing for the night's performance. It was the usual thing; an exhibition that may be heard any night in Paris many times multiplied. Shrill voices and doubtful themes. Mauleverer wanted to depart at once; but, to punish him for his heresy, I made him endure the infliction until he declared himself saddened and vanquished. Yet he was right after all. Scarcely any influence is lasting upon the human mind. What it sees every day it ceases to appreciate. The utmost beauty of form and feature, the charm of a graceful spirit, a gracious presence, even these must be occasionally withdrawn, or they will lose their power.

"Shall we return to-night, Mauleverer?" I asked, as we left the garden.

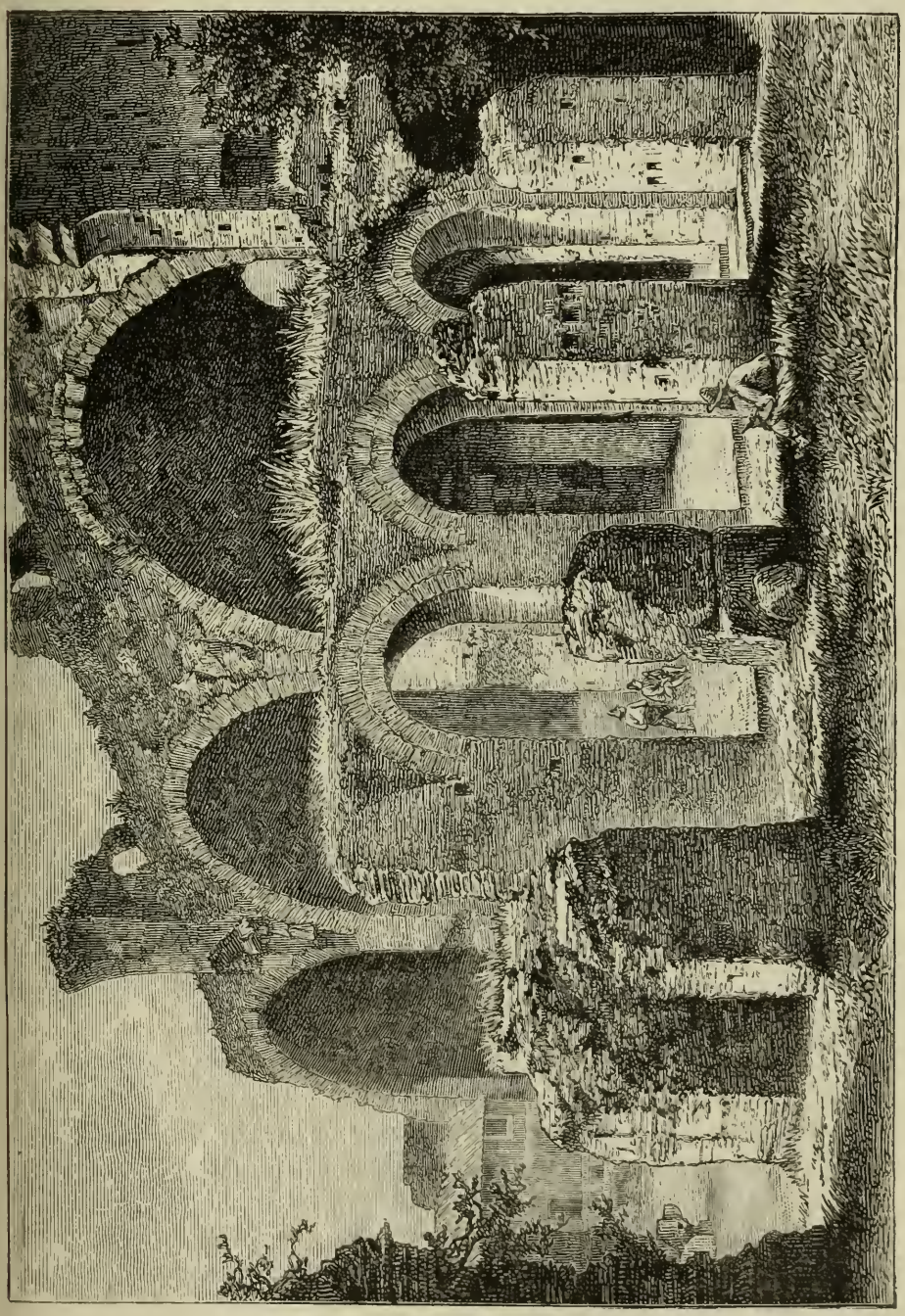
"Et tu, Brute!" he cried, as he had cried not long ago; and he linked his arm in mine as though he would drag me from temptation. "Let us to the Forum; tread the sacred way; lose ourselves in visions of the past. Let us contemplate the spot where the Vestal Virgins watched and ministered to the sacred light, and in their beauty and purity forget the wickedness of the present world."

We were not far from the Coliseum, and soon found ourselves once more standing within its walls; once more amazed, and for evermore amazed at the power which had raised so mighty a building. There is nothing like it in the world. It impresses you far more than the size and magnificence of St. Peter's. As you stand you imagine the building clothed in beauty and perfection. It is no longer a ruin. You see it crowded with a countless sea of faces—eager, cruel, intent. You hear the approach of the Emperor; he mounts his private staircase, and the conqueror of the world advances to the place set apart for him. The cheering of a multitude rises heavenward with a great shout, as if it would rend the very skies. It subsides, and in the silence which ensues you fancy you hear the roaring of wild beasts impatient for their prey. As St. Paul's words occur to you, "I have fought with beasts at Ephesus," you never before seemed to realise their full force or the horrors of the situation.

Then you imagine the doors of the arena thrown open. The beasts issue forth in turn; the combatants stand quivering with nervous courage, prepared for the unequal encounter, braced for victory or death. There must be a terrible element of cruelty in mankind. He was made in the image of the Heavenly, but where, we ask, is it now?

The Coliseum has been the scene of frightful cruelties, and Christian martyrs unnumbered have yielded up their life in the arena.

Here St. Ignatius was brought by Trajan from Antioch, and was devoured of wild beasts: the first of a long line of martyrs. The record is endless. Soon after the death of Ignatius over one



RUIN OF BASILICA OF CONSTANTINE.

hundred Christians were shot down with arrows. The tortures and torments to which all these martyrs were subjected will not bear recording.

The building was begun under Vespasian, in the year 72. It is said to have employed 12,000 captive Jews, and to have cost, in the

outer walls alone, nearly a million of money. It consisted of four storeys: the first Doric, the second Ionic, the third and fourth Corinthian. The circumference was two thousand feet, the length of the ellipse six hundred and twenty feet, the width five hundred and twenty-five feet, the height one hundred and sixty feet.

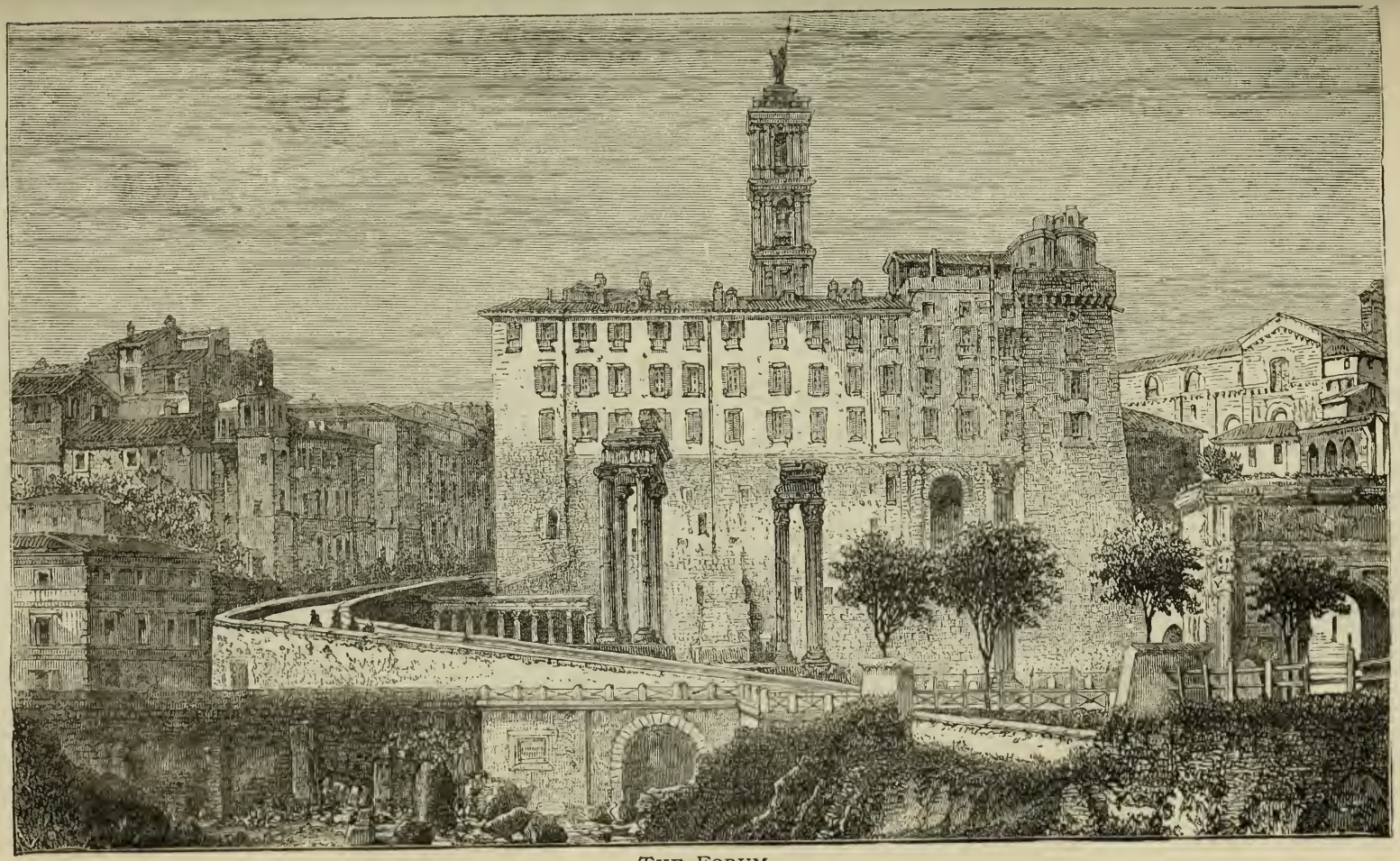
At the dedication of the building 5,000 wild beasts were killed in the arena. The gladiatorial combats gradually became so savage, unrestrained, and frequent, that at length their numbers had to be limited. Even women are said to have taken part in them. By a law passed, not more than sixty couples of gladiators were allowed to fight at one time. The length of the arena was two hundred and seventy-eight feet, the width one hundred and seventy-seven. The superficial area of the building was six acres. It was therefore of unrivalled magnitude; and one gazes upon it to-day with strange emotions of awe and wonder.

The last recorded exhibition is that of a bull fight given by the Roman nobles in 1332: but the gladiatorial combats were put an end to at the beginning of the fifth century.

In later centuries—so great the contrast—the building became famous for its flora, and as many as two hundred and fifty different specimens are said to have existed within its walls. This has all disappeared. Since the Papal downfall the ruin of the Coliseum has been very much neglected. All its floral specimens have been uprooted by ruthless hands, and the building in the process is said to have received more injury than centuries of time had previously caused. So passes away all man's highest achievements and grandest monuments and records under the relentless finger of Time.

Just beyond the Coliseum lies the Forum, and it is here, perhaps, more than anywhere else, that you stand face to face with Ancient Rome. For the Forum in Rome corresponded to the Acropolis in Athens, and was the centre of all that was interesting and important. It was surrounded by all Rome's stately buildings and temples. The seven hills overshadowed it. Here imperial power and splendour found its home and its recognition.

As you pass through the Arch of Titus and tread the Via Sacra, you are surrounded by ruins on the right hand and on the left of what once was great and glorious. The whole scene breathes an atmosphere of antiquity and refinement. Pillars stand upright, alone or in groups; others broken, like the symbols of a life cut short. Huge blocks of stone, now lying solitary and lost, were once, perchance, the corner stone of a temple dedicated to Venus or Roma; or the key-stone of some exquisite arch of which all record has disappeared. Fragments of steps are multiplied that once led to some Ionic or Corinthian portico, or up which Romans may have ascended and descended in their worship of some heathen deity. Most conspicuous are the ruins of the Temple of Vesta and of the house inhabited by the six Vestal Virgins, whose office was to watch the



THE FORUM.

sacred fire in the Temple by night and day, and to guard the sacred relics saved by Æneas from the burning of Troy.

These Vestal Virgins were taken from patrician families between the ages of six and ten. At the age of thirty they were allowed to withdraw from their ministry and marry, but there is no record of any one of them having done so. The penalty for letting the fire go out was to be scourged with stripes, and it was considered a token of coming evil to the city. For broken vows the penalty was to be buried alive. The dress of the Virgins was a straight robe of white wool fastened at the waist by a silken cord; and a veil was thrown over the head at sacrificial times.

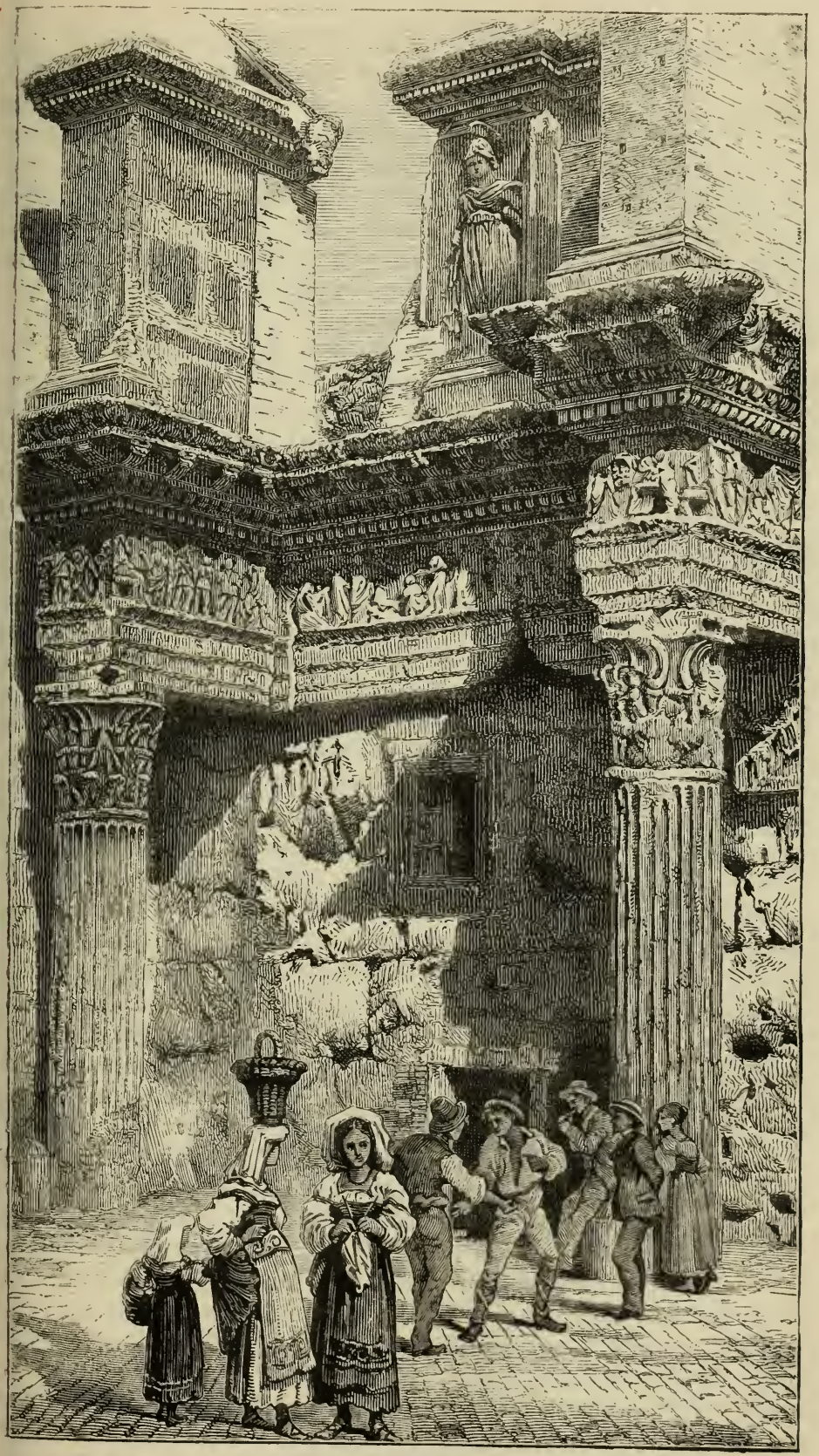
The temples in the Forum are numberless, but the ruin of the Temple of Vesta is, perhaps, one of the most perfect and beautiful. It was built by Numa Pompilius in the year 79, and is said to have been typical of the domestic hearth of the city.

Coming to Rome on this occasion we had determined that we would visit neither picture nor sculpture galleries. Their name is legion and their demand upon time and energy almost inexhaustible. We knew the galleries of Rome well, and in a stay of a few days it was wisest to avoid them altogether.

But an exception we made in favour of the Palace of the Vatican, and once more we ascended the effective Scala Regia, and stood in admiration before the beauties of the Sixtine Chapel, with its wonderful frescoes and Michael Angelo's matchless roof, representing a series of scenes from the Creation to the Deluge, and figures of the Prophets and the Sibyls. Once more we saw the fresco of the Last Judgment, with its multitude of figures, its wonderful composition, yet heaviness of character. We see the Saviour with the Virgin on His right, exhibiting the print of the nails in His hands, the wound in His side. Near Him are saints and martyrs, St. Peter with the keys conspicuous. A group of angels are sounding the last trump, and supporting the Books of Judgment. You see the fall of the lost; the triumph of the blessed. Charon is rowing a group across the Styx. The fresco has been touched by other hands at different times, and most of its original tone and colour has faded; but for boldness of composition and grandeur of conception it is almost unrivalled.

On the paintings of the Vatican, volumes have been written. We looked again at a few of our especial favourites, and at some of the magnificent and often matchless sculpture. And who that has examined these galleries has not been struck with the faces of the two Popes, placed side by side, and noted the singular contrast: the one elevated, refined, intellectual; the other all that is the contrary to this.

In this wonderful old palace—the most wonderful in the world—the Pope passes his days, under the shadow of St. Peter's, which he so rarely enters. Here he is a comparative prisoner, but in



PAST AND PRESENT.

what a prison does he spend his life! The extent of its buildings and grounds seems incredible. They alone form a small town and territory, and the Pope can enjoy delightful drives within the seclusion of his own garden walls. What treasures are within his keeping! Prisoner though he may be, temporal power that he may have lost, what influence still goes forth to the world from that nook in Rome. The shadows of the seven hills surround it; there is little to be seen from it but the blue skies of heaven; but the influence of one man within its precincts is still sufficient to break or to bind laws, to control monarchs and influence rebellions.

You enter by the famous bronze gate, surmounted by the two angels and a rich mosaic. Passing through a long corridor you ascend the royal staircase, and are fairly within the building which has so long controlled the destinies of the Roman Catholic world.

It has taken more than five centuries to complete the Vatican. It is said that a palace stood here as early as the days of Constantine, attached to his Basilica. In the twelfth century it was rebuilt by Innocent III., but the Palace of the Lateran had been the residence of the Popes for nearly one thousand years; and it was only after their return from Avignon in 1377 that they removed to the Vatican. The Pope was Gregory XI., and he, whatever he might have believed about his spiritual infallibility, felt that, like all men, he was mortal. The Vatican was nearer to the Castle of St. Angelo, and, in any sudden emergency, he would have a closer refuge to fly to.

From that time the building has been added to by different popes, with more or less ambitious designs. Nicholas V. determined to make it the richest and most beautiful palace in the world, but died before accomplishing his object. His private chapel, in which are the beautiful frescoes of Fra Angelico, is said to be the only portion of the present Vatican that existed before his time. In the fifteenth century, Sixtus IV. added the exquisite Sixtine Chapel, containing Michael Angelo's most perfect work. The fresco of the Last Judgment alone cost him seven years' labour. Wonderful as a study it undoubtedly is; as a masterpiece in depicting expression; the horrors and remorse of the condemned, the beatified condition of the redeemed: but it has perhaps been well said that it is more sublime than beautiful. Yet it is only a shadow and faint reflection of what it once was. Like the fresco of the Last Supper in Milan by Leonardo da Vinci, it is faded and almost lost.

Julius II. united the Vatican with the Villa Belvedere, and laid the foundation of the Vatican Museum. The part now inhabited by the Popes was begun by Sixtus V. and completed by Clement VIII. And so it went on, until now the palace, including halls, galleries, etc., contains nearly 4,500 rooms, eight grand staircases, 200 smaller ones, is nearly 1,200 feet long, and 800 feet broad. That the palace still possesses so many of its treasures is due to the English. Napoleon plundered the Vatican and removed his spoils

to the Louvre, but the English Government compelled their restitution and defrayed a large portion of the expense, which Pius VII. was not able to afford.

That night when the sun had long set, and the mists had cleared and the dangerous hour was past, we went out and viewed it all by moonlight. The Forum looked like a city of ruins, a city of the dead. The cold, beautiful light, clear, sparkling and silvery, fell upon all around. Deep reflections were thrown behind arches and pillars, and fell athwart the pavements like shadows cast by the ghosts of ancient Rome. The Sacred Way lay white and distinct in the pale light, broken only here and there by these same shadows. It was all silent, mysterious and ghostly; strangely, weirdly beautiful and impressive. Even Mauleverer admitted its influence, but declared it was more history than moonlight.

Passing through the arch of Titus, and crossing to the Coliseum, the effect was still more startling.

As we stood in the centre of what had once been the arena, peopled with gladiators and wild beasts, we were lost in the grandeur and extent of the scene. Here again the lights and shadows were vivid and distinct. The intense silence of the place was almost appalling. We listened, thinking to hear the weird cry of what Shakespeare has well called "Night's shrieking harbinger;" but this silence of the dead was unbroken. We looked, expecting to see the birds in their noiseless flight outlined between us and the silvery disc; but no wing was spread, no shadow flitted across. The building seemed to have countless great black eyes staring down upon us, and bidding us begone and not intrude upon their solitude, or mock with our presence their departed glory. The uneven ground beneath us seemed yawning to receive us, and plunge us into the caves below, where the skeletons and ghosts of countless wild beasts might well be waiting to greet us with glaring eyes and terrific roar.

It all has been. It is all over. But Rome is full of these ghosts and recollections. Every fresh visit arouses and reawakens them. "When Rome falls, the world will fall," said the venerable Bede. But another world sprang up, and new worlds undreamed of were discovered; and each has his day and passes away; and nothing remains for ever except Truth and Goodness, and the decrees of Wisdom working on to "some far off, divine event."

So our poet is right when he sings:

Our little worlds they have their day,
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of Thee;
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

A HAIR-BREADTH ESCAPE.

IN 1870, a month or two before the outbreak of the Franco-German war, one of the most promising cadets, or, as they are commonly styled, "pupils" of the military college of St. Cyr was Gaston de Langeais. He was the last representative of an ancient family in Brittany, whose traditional obstinacy and impatience of control he had inherited to an extent which rendered him more popular with his comrades than with the presiding authorities.

Not that he was especially remarkable for turbulence or insubordination, or that his infractions of rules were more frequent than those of the majority of his fellows. On one point alone he was intractable, and exercised all his ingenuity in repeated attempts to escape a regulation which was inexpressibly repugnant to him. Gifted by nature with an abundance of luxuriantly curling hair, of which he was inordinately vain, the prescribed necessity of having it cropped short was a perpetual grievance to him; and he looked anxiously forward to his second year at St. Cyr, and his consequent emancipation from the too close scrutiny to which he had hitherto been periodically subjected.

"In two months," he said exultingly to one of his intimates, "my time here will be up, and once named officer I shall be free as air, and no longer ashamed to show myself to my cousin Louise. For you see," he added, lifting his cap, and displaying a thick growth of short curls carefully flattened down, "I have still some hair left."

Castles in the air, however, are apt to collapse; and Gaston's visionary projects were, to say the least, premature.

A few mornings later, at the usual hour of parade, the corps of youngsters were unexpectedly summoned to undergo the inspection of the infantry lieutenant, Bouchard: a lynx-eyed martinet, by no means favourably disposed towards pupils destined for cavalry regiments, whom he contemptuously designated as "coxcombs." De Langeais, as the recognised leader of the band, was particularly obnoxious to him; and his keen eyes twinkled maliciously as he stopped short before the young man, and examined him curiously.

"Take off your cap," he said.

Gaston obeyed with an inward shiver of apprehension.

"I thought as much," growled the lieutenant. "If that superfluous hair has not disappeared by this time to-morrow, you will pass the next four days in the 'salle de police.'"

"You are in for it now," whispered his sympathising comrade when the terrible Bouchard had passed on.

"Not a bit of it," replied de Langeais, shrugging his shoulders unconcernedly.

"Why, what on earth can you do?"

"I don't exactly know; but I intend to put off the evil day as long as I possibly can."

Next morning, with the aid of a couple of brushes well soaked in water, he succeeded in levelling the rebellious locks so as to deceive even a practised eye, and appeared on parade with his wonted jaunty air, although not a little nervous as to the result of the coming ordeal. Presently the lieutenant arrived with an ominously slow step, and pausing as before exactly in front of Gaston, repeated the order of the previous day.

"Take off your cap."

For a moment Bouchard seemed puzzled by the apparently smooth surface of the "pupil's" head; but, bent on ascertaining the real state of the case, he unceremoniously lifted a portion of the flattened hair with his forefinger, thereby disclosing a substratum of tiny curls. Then, turning to the adjutant who accompanied him, he briefly consigned the offender for four days to the "salle de police," and continued his round of inspection with a self-satisfied grin.

During the last day of his enforced seclusion Gaston practically employed his leisure in decorating his knee, by a judicious mixture of blue and green paint, with a tolerably exact imitation of a bruise, which he showed to the regimental doctor, pretending that the contusion had been caused by his coming in contact with a post in the riding school. Whether he implicitly believed the statement or not, the good-natured medico put him on the sick list, and thus twenty-four hours were gained. His reappearance on parade, however, became at length a matter of necessity; and this time his continued disobedience entailed on him a week's further confinement; at the expiration of which he was again consigned to durance vile for an entire fortnight.

"This will never do," thought de Langeais. "The earthenware pot must in the long run be smashed by the iron one, and I shall have to give in at last. I had better try old Grison once more."

Whereupon, having previously, by way of precaution, added a few artistic touches to the pictorial embellishment of his knee, he limped into the consulting room of Dr. Grison, who was fortunately too much engaged with other patients to bestow more than a very cursory glance at the bruise; and, not knowing precisely what to make of the case, gave the new-comer an order of admission to the infirmary, then under the charge of half-a-dozen sisters of charity, presided over by a Lady Superior.

Gaston had hardly exchanged his ordinary attire for the regulation loose grey coat and cotton nightcap when Pitrot, the tonsor of the establishment, was announced, bearing an enormous pair of scissors and a laconic note, which ran as follows:

"The pupil de Langeais' hair is to be cut off immediately.

"BOUCHARD."

The poor coiffeur, unwilling to lose so excellent a customer for pomades and other capillary unguents, and yet compelled to obey the imperative mandate, was in despair.

"Would it not be possible, monsieur," he suggested, "to obtain from the Lady Superior a certificate that the effect of the operation might be injurious to an invalid?"

Gaston could not help smiling at the idea. "I don't quite see," he said, "what a cropped head has to do with a bruise on the knee; but there can be no harm in trying."

As good luck would have it, Sister Angélique, in whose memory perhaps still lingered the fondly cherished recollection of some romantic episode of her youthful days, listened with interest to the handsome Breton, while he related to her his hopes and fears, and his attachment to his cousin Louise. Being naturally kind-hearted and sympathetic, she agreed without much persuasion to his rather incongruous request; so that Père Pitrot, relieved from his disagreeable responsibility, went on his way rejoicing.

A quarter of an hour later, the lieutenant burst into the infirmary in a paroxysm of fury.

"So, youngster," he cried, "it seems you are bent on braving me! Well, we shall see. You cannot stay shamming here for ever; and mark my words—when you do come out, I'll have that head of yours as smooth as a billiard ball!"

With this parting threat he bounced out of the room; and next day everyone of the future cavalry officers—the prisoner alone excepted—underwent the summary operation of "cropping" at the hands of the tonsor, Pitrot.

Meanwhile, Gaston's position was by no means an enviable one. Through the grated windows of the infirmary he could see his comrades mounting their horses in the courtyard, and caracoling gaily as they passed; and on Sundays—most painful trial of all—could hear with a pang of envy the joyous shouts of his more fortunate colleagues, emancipated for a few hours from duty, and on their way to catch the first train to Paris.

The day of deliverance, however, was at hand. Early on the 14th of July—a date never to be forgotten by de Langeais—the occupants of the infirmary were suddenly startled by a tremendous uproar immediately under their windows; and, on looking out, imagined for a moment that Pandemonium had broken loose.

Such a spectacle had assuredly never been witnessed at St. Cyr. The entire quadrangle was thronged by an excited multitude, rushing to and fro in tumultuous disorder, flinging their caps high in the air, and bursting every now and then into a loud and prolonged hurrah! Was it a revolt, marvelled the sisters and their patients, or what could it possibly mean?

A few minutes sufficed to explain the mystery. A hasty step was heard outside the door, immediately followed by the entrance into

the sick room of an adjutant, bearing in his hand an official document, the contents of which, recited by him in a sonorous voice, were greeted with an enthusiasm bordering on frenzy.

"War is declared with Prussia. By Imperial decree, the seniors are henceforth sub-lieutenants."

Before the sisters, deafened by the clamour, had recovered from their stupefaction, they found themselves alone in the infirmary: the invalids, one and all, having mustered strength enough to throw aside their wraps, and make the best of their way downstairs.

Gaston, whose instantaneous cure Sister Angélique afterwards described as little short of miraculous, was the first to rejoin his comrades; and, descrying his persecutor, Bouchard, standing apart from the rest, and apparently in no very good humour, went up to him with outstretched hand and a frank, cheery smile.

"Well, lieutenant," he said, "you won't have me cropped now!"

"So it seems," grimly replied the other, returning somewhat reluctantly the proffered grasp. "You have more luck than you deserve; for, depend upon it, I should have shown you no mercy!"

Each of the seniors entitled to promotion having notified to the adjutant on duty the regiment to which he was desirous of being attached, the preparations for departure were speedily completed. At an early hour in the afternoon the band of exulting youngsters started for Paris, intent on making the most of the three days allowed them before joining their respective corps. Gaston's regiment being stationed at Lille, he had ample leisure, after partaking of a farewell repast at Brebant's with his old companions, to carry into execution a long-cherished project of paying a flying visit to his cousin Louise at Trouville; and, repairing on the third day to headquarters, reported himself to the colonel of the 42nd Dragoons, who received him most cordially.

"You are dispensed from duty," said his chief, "until you have got your kit in order. Ma foi, young man, you have arrived in the very nick of time, for before the week is out, we shall be on our way to the front."

On his first appearance at mess, de Langeais discovered to his astonishment that every one of his new comrades, without exception, was closely cropped. "A very necessary precaution," said the president, "in war time; the less incumbrance we carry about us the better. A long beard and as little hair as possible; no comb or razor wanted, nothing but a simple 'brush up'."

"Not to mention," chimed in an old campaigner of proverbial baldness, "that a heavy helmet plays the very deuce with one's hair."

Gaston listened with due respect to these well-meant exhortations, but without the slightest intention of being influenced by them; and, on the arrival of his division at Metz some days later, had already, more than once, declined to avail himself of the services of the regimental barber.

Nevertheless, he instinctively felt that a continued refusal to conform to the general custom must inevitably endanger his popularity, and that the only way to atone for this obnoxious singularity was to distinguish himself by some exploit which might obtain for him an honourable mention in the order of the day.

An opportunity soon came. On the eighteenth of August his regiment, posted near St. Privat, behind an avenue of poplars bordering the road to Saarbrück, had been exposed for several hours to a galling fire of the German artillery; and had suffered severely from an incessant storm of shells, which were beginning to set the trees on fire. The position of the French corps became untenable, and the colonel, deciding that the enemy's guns must at any cost be silenced, ordered a small detachment of dragoons commanded by de Langeais to charge, and cut them off from the main body. The Germans, taken by surprise and imagining they were about to be attacked by the entire regiment, ceased firing and hastily retreated, leaving one of their guns on the field, which Gaston, at the head of fifteen men, bore down upon, and, sabring the gunners, carried it triumphantly into the French lines.

"Bravo!" cried the colonel, warmly grasping the young sub-lieutenant's hand; "you have deserved the Cross for this, and I will take care that you get it."

Stimulated by this first success, and eager to justify, by some further act of daring, the good opinion of his chief, de Langeais neglected no opportunity of proving himself worthy of it. Dispatched on a foraging expedition, and attacked by an outpost of infantry, he completely routed them, and brought ten prisoners into the camp; and a few days later held his ground for half-an-hour, unsupported, save by his own men, against an entire corps of the enemy. His gallantry did not pass unrewarded. Not only was the Cross of the Legion of Honour conferred on him, but his name was three times mentioned for exceptional bravery in the order of the day, and his speedy promotion to the rank of lieutenant was generally regarded as a certainty.

At this juncture, the unexpected capitulation of Metz was a severe blow to him, and, unwilling to accept comparative liberty on parole, he conceived a project which, although extremely hazardous, might possibly enable him to join the army of the Loire. His design being approved of by the general commanding under Bazaine, who entrusted him with a letter to his colleague, Aurelle de Paladines, informing him that the army of Prince Frederick Charles would shortly march towards the Loire, Gaston exchanged his uniform for a blouse and a peasant's straw hat, and carrying a basket of eggs, pursued his way coolly in the direction of the enemy's lines.

"It is a terrible risk," he thought, "but better be shot at once than rot in a German prison."

Challenged by the first sentinel he met, and arrested on suspicion,

he was taken before the colonel of the regiment, who, surrounded by his officers in council, scrutinised the prisoner attentively.

"Where do you come from?" he inquired in tolerable French.

"From Ladonchamps, on my way with these eggs to Grigy," was the young man's reply.

"Are you aware that you run the risk of being treated as a spy?" pursued his interrogator.

"Necessity has no choice," retorted de Langeais with a perfectly indifferent air.

During this brief colloquy, the officers glanced curiously at the stalwart individual before them, whose appearance and manner contrasted so strangely with the homely dress he wore; and were almost unanimously of the colonel's openly-expressed opinion, that he was no peasant, but an officer in disguise, and consequently a spy. A pause boding no good to the accused ensued, and in another moment his fate would have been sealed, when a grey-haired major, who had been intently gazing at de Langeais, suddenly rose from his seat.

"Stay," he exclaimed, "with all submission, I think you are mistaken. This man, whoever he may be, is no officer. All those we have taken prisoners have been close cropped, and no one ever heard of a French soldier on active service with such a head of hair as that."

"True, the major is right," assented several of those present.

"It may be so," said the colonel, only half convinced, "and in that case he is entitled to the benefit of the doubt. Give him a pass, and let him go and be hanged somewhere else."

"A narrow escape," muttered Gaston to himself as he left the camp. "I wonder what Bouchard would say if he knew of it."

A week later, our hero reached his destination, and delivered his credentials to the general in command, by whom the grade of lieutenant was immediately conferred on him. At the conclusion of the campaign he was promoted to a captaincy, and in 1871, after the final rout of the Commune, married his cousin Louise. In the following year, while on leave in Paris, he came across his old enemy, Bouchard, on the Boulevard des Italiens.

"How goes it with you?" asked the latter, as they were sipping their absinthe together.

"Admirably," replied Gaston. "Here am I, a captain at twenty-two, chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and the husband of a charming wife; and all this—no thanks to you, by the way, Bouchard—because *I saved my hair.*"

CHARLES HERVEY.

THE DUCHESS'S DILEMMA.

THE Duke and Duchess of Skye were great potentates in their own land—looked upon almost as royal personages by the smaller people who surrounded them. The Duke's property was of great extent and value, and the Duchess had also inherited a large fortune from her brother. Thus they were enabled to keep up a very large establishment and live in a very stately fashion.

The Duke was extremely handsome and dignified, and, truth to tell, exceeding dull. He had very few opinions of his own, but was always ready to adopt those of his really clever wife; and she, wisely, did her best to prevent his appearing the nonentity he was, by constantly quoting him as an authority: "The Duke says——" or, "The Duke is of the opinion——" or, "The Duke wishes——" being phrases that frequently fell from her lips.

The Duchess, besides being a clever was a wonderfully handsome woman, nearly as tall as her husband, with a queenly presence, and features that though somewhat severely classical, were wonderfully beautiful. She always wore handsome clothes—rich velvets, satins and brocades, priceless lace and magnificent jewels—knowing that they became her right well. She was terribly proud, and never ceased to deplore the state of modern society.

The only child of this couple, the Marquis of Eliot, was, alas, a sad disappointment to his parents. He was small, insignificant-looking, and anything but clever. As a child he had been terribly delicate, and in consequence he had never been able to go to school, but had a tutor and masters at home. The one advantage in this arrangement being, as his mother said: "He would not make undesirable acquaintances: both Eton and Harrow are becoming terribly mixed. The great aim of vulgar, pushing people is to send their sons to one of these schools so as to effect an introduction to boys of a class superior to their own."

Perhaps owing to his never having been to school, and his delicacy having kept him much in the background, Lord Eliot was extremely shy and awkward; he seldom spoke, and made no friends. As he grew up, the Duchess was in despair about him—he showed absolutely no taste for any particular line—he was neither politician, scholar, nor sportsman, and disliked society. In fact, he was merely a deadly dull young man.

As soon as his "coming of age" festivities were over, the Duchess began to look out for a wife for her son. It was important he should marry. The Duke's next brother's eldest son was fast and extravagant, and had married a rapid little lady whose conduct scandalised her

husband's family terribly; and the thought that she should ever be Duchess of Skye was intolerable. So many eligible young ladies, whose birth and breeding were such as to make them suitable and desirable for so high a position, were invited with their parents to visit the Duke and Duchess, in hopes that Lord Eliot would fancy one of them. That any well-brought-up girl should think of refusing so great an alliance never entered the Duchess's head. Alas! one after the other came and went—Lord Eliot made no sign—he avoided the syrens, one and all, and if forced to be in their company, hardly spoke. For two years this had gone on; the Duchess had frequently said: "You *ought* to marry, Eliot;" and he always replied meekly: "Yes, mamma—by and bye;" still no progress did he make to the desired end.

The winter of 188— was very severe. The Marquis caught a chill, and for some weeks his health caused great anxiety. Then the doctors said he must spend the spring in a warmer climate. Nice was chosen, and as his parents were unable to leave home at that time, the Duchess settled that her nephew, Lord George Chatfield, a younger son of her brother, the Marquis of Danecourt, should accompany his cousin.

Lord George was rather a favourite of his aunt's. He was an astute young gentleman, knew how to play upon her weak points, and had early found that as the very liberal allowance he received from his father could easily be spent before the next year's instalment was due, an occasional "tip" from the Duchess, who was most generous to those she liked, was by no means unwelcome. So he had, with a good grace, endured the dulness of Craigholme Castle, Panshere Park, the Wilderness, and various other abodes of the Duke's, and the society of his still duller cousin, many a time and oft; knowing that when his visit drew to a close, a cheque for a really substantial sum would find its way from his aunt's possession into his not unwilling hand.

He really was of a kindly nature, and though himself a good shot and fearless rider, did not openly show that he despised Lord Eliot and considered him a "poor creature" because he could do neither. Consequently his cousin had more liking for George than for any of the other relations, who never concealed their contempt for a "wretched weakling who has no manliness about him," as they were wont to think and say.

A visit to Nice at that time suited Lord George admirably. He knew all expenses would be paid with a liberal hand, and at the moment he was specially hard up: "very much in Short street," as he expressed it. So a temporary absence from home and too importunate duns in a bright and cheery place like Nice, and within reach of Monte Carlo, was not at all a bad prospect. The preparations were soon made, rooms in the best hotel taken, and accompanied by courier, valets and a whole paraphernalia of travelling comforts provided by

the Duchess, the cousins left England and fog for bright skies, clear air, and all the other delights of the sunny South of France.

Lord Eliot wrote home regularly. His letters were like himself, not very interesting. "I feel stronger, and George and I have been several long drives. The weather is charming—so nice to go out without being nipped in two by an east wind. Hope you are both well." This was the sum and substance of all his letters, and his parents, knowing their son, did not expect more.

After two months at Nice, Lord Eliot wrote that, feeling much better, his cousin had persuaded him to dine at the table d'hôte. "George thinks it will be more cheerful than in our private apartment," he explained. Altogether the Nice trip seemed to be a success.

The Duke and Duchess were spending the spring months at Panshere Park. The post arrived at breakfast time, and one morning, early in April, the Duchess found a pile of letters beside her plate.

"One from Eliot," she said, taking it up and opening it; and, as usual, began to read it aloud.

"My dear Mamma,—You have always urged me to marry, so I am sure you will be glad to hear of my engagement. I trust you will like Maud—she is very pretty, and says her waist is only seventeen inches.

"Your affectionate son,

"Eliot."

"Engaged!" exclaimed both parents. "*Who* can it be—why does he not write more fully? Maud? It must be one of the Fullarton girls. I know they are at Nice, and they are the only people he has mentioned in his letters." And the Duchess hurriedly went to the library and returned with a large Peerage, which she opened and turned to the entry, "Glanmere, Duke of," and hastily glanced down the long list of children. "Yes, it must be," and she read out, "'Lady Maud Geraldine Flora, the third daughter.' I knew Alice Glanmere brought out a girl this year, and she was thought very pretty; they are all charmingly well-bred and accomplished; nothing could be better. We must write to the dear boy at once."

"No doubt, my love, you are right. So clever of you to guess it, for really Eliot's letter is very vague."

"Ah! here's a letter from Jane Cromlie, from Nice—perhaps this will tell us something—she knows the Glanmeres so well." And the Duchess hastily opened another letter in a thin foreign envelope, and read aloud:

"Dearest Katharine,—I do not wish to be officious and disagreeable, but I do think it right you should know that Eliot is making himself very conspicuous here with a family called Jobson. ("Good gracious!" interpolated the Duchess, "what a dreadful name. Dear Maud will soon stop that.") They are staying at his hotel, which is

doubtless how he met them, and for the last fortnight, wherever they go, Eliot is in attendance. They are as vulgar as their name. The mother quite *too* impossible; the daughters pretty in a flashy, underbred style, and ridiculously over-dressed—noisy, fast, and altogether terrible. Alice Glanmere, who stayed at the same hotel, was horrified to see Eliot in such company. She and her charming girls have now gone to Florence. She tried to persuade your son to go with them, but he was so infatuated with Miss Maud Jobson—— "

The Duchess's voice, as she read, had become more and more agitated. When she came to the name, she positively screamed.

"Miss Maud Jobson! Oh! Frederick! this is too terrible! How can we stop this horrible thing? *Miss Maud Jobson*—how can Eliot be such a fool—to think we should allow it?"

"But, my dear, I thought you told me Eliot was engaged to Lady Maud Fullarton?" The Duke having got one idea in his head, had not yet grasped the second.

"So I thought—so I hoped!—but this letter throws a new light," and the frantic lady sank into a chair, with her son's letter in one hand and Lady Jane Cromlie's in the other.

"We must go to Nice, at once—telegraph—do *something*. Oh! what *shall* we do!"

"Is there no letter from George?" asked the Duke.

"I never looked. Yes, here is one." And the Duchess hastily opened and read the following:

"My dear Aunt,—Eliot tells me he has written to inform you of his engagement. I really do not know what to say about it—I was as much surprised as you no doubt are. Fact is, I felt a little low myself, and went away for a few days' change. (N.B.—He did not think it necessary to explain that the "lowness" was chiefly in a financial point of view, and that he had gone to Monte Carlo and enjoyed a very successful week there.) And when I returned Eliot informed me that he was engaged to Miss Maud Jobson. I was not aware he even knew these people, who, though staying at the hotel, we had never spoken to before I left. I begged him to write and consult you and my uncle before anything was settled, but he answered that although he should, of course, write to you, everything *was* settled. I do trust you will not think I am to blame in the matter. "Believe me, your affectionate nephew,

"George Chatfield."

"It must be stopped! Let us telegraph to Eliot to come home at once. It *cannot* be allowed. *Jobson!* 'She says her waist is only seventeen inches.'" The Duchess groaned as she read the words.

Telegrams were at once despatched to Lord Eliot and his cousin, urging immediate return; and the Duke and Duchess left Panshere

to meet their son in London, having telegraphed their intention to him.

The days before the travellers could arrive were terribly long to the anxious parents, but at length a telegram came from Dover.

"Shall be in town by lunch time.

"GEORGE CHATFIELD."

"Why does not Eliot telegraph himself?" they wondered; but when at one o'clock Lord George alone entered the room where his uncle and aunt sat anxiously expectant, they both exclaimed breathlessly:

"Oh! George, where is he? Has he not come home?"

"Yes—he has come home; but so have the Jobsons, and they have persuaded him to go with them straight to Brighton, where they live."

"To Brighton!—we must follow at once. Oh, George, how could you allow him to suppose for one moment that we should consent to this! How did he meet these people?"

"Well, it appears Miss Maud Jobson has a much cherished poodle, and one day at Nice the animal was nearly run over by a passing fiacre. Eliot happened to be standing near, and seized the creature from under the advancing wheels, just in time to save its life. Mrs. and Miss Jobson, full of effusive gratitude, and no doubt knowing who the rescuer was, made no end of fuss over the 'courage,' 'promptitude,' etc. etc., that had saved their pet, and having thus made the acquaintance, continued to follow it up by every means in their power. 'Darling Boo-boo's brave rescuer' must accompany them for drives, walks, to the play, etc. etc. They had their places put next him at the table d'hôte—and Eliot, never having been regarded as a hero before—" and Lord George smiled deprecatingly at his aunt, who made a gesture of disgust and impatience—"took kindly to the homage. In fact, when I returned to Nice, he informed me of his engagement. Of course I wrote to you at once, and believe Eliot did so also."

There was nothing for it but pursuit to Brighton. And there that evening the Duke and Duchess had a long, and on one side, stormy interview with their son and heir. They argued, entreated and even threatened—it was no use—Lord Eliot, like most weak people, was terribly obstinate. He had made up his mind to marry Miss Jobson, and opposition only made him more determined.

"We must now try the other side," moaned the Duchess, as her son left the room. "Surely they can be bought off."

Next day, the Duchess of Skye drove up to the door of 250, Marine Parade. "Such a good house," she sighed. "No lack of money, I fear, which will make it so much more difficult to buy them off." Mrs. Jobson was at home, and the house inside bore many evidences of wealth. It was gaudy, ostentatious, vulgar—

much gilding, huge mirrors; brightly-coloured, new. The Duchess groaned in spirit as she recognised the difficulties before her.

The drawing-room was vacant when the Duchess was ushered in, and she had time to glance round. Furniture covered in blue satin, gilt legs and backs, masses of draperies in most inappropriate places, tables covered with photograph frames—no books, no work, no flowers—everything tasteless and showy. After a few minutes' waiting, the door opened, and the owner of all this appeared, and well-matched her surroundings. A large, stout woman, very much made up, with masses of false yellow hair, dressed in the most ultra-fashionable style—a bright green silk dress, elaborately made, and trimmed heavily with gold embroidery, innumerable diamond brooches, bangles, rings—one glittering mass.

"My dear Duchess, how kind of you to come so soon; Maud will be in directly." And, smiling effusively, Mrs. Jobson advanced with outstretched hand. But her heart somewhat failed as the Duchess, ignoring the hand, merely bowed stiffly.

"Madam," she began, "I have called to see you on what, I fear, will be an unpleasant business for us both."

"Unpleasant," gasped Mrs. Jobson, paling beneath her rouge. "Has anything happened to the Marquis?"

"Not that I am aware of. But I have come to tell you this foolish entanglement can no longer go on. The Duke absolutely refuses his consent——"

"The Marquis is of age; he has promised to marry my daughter; he is not going to get out of it now," interrupted Mrs. Jobson.

"Lord Eliot is entirely dependent on the Duke; he has absolutely nothing to marry on."

"But he *will* be Duke of Skye some day, and Maud will be Duchess." And Mrs. Jobson faced her antagonist triumphantly. "And here she is"—as the door opened, and a tall, showy-looking girl, a younger edition of her mother, entered the room.

"I should prefer that this interview be between you and me alone," said the Duchess coldly, completely ignoring her daughter-in-law elect.

"Oh! ma—if I'm not wanted, I'd better go," and Miss Maud, tossing her head disdainfully, flounced out of the room.

"I am empowered by the Duke to—to——" the Duchess faltered, as she glanced at the prosperous, over-dressed woman before her, and her task seemed at each moment more and more difficult—"to—to—offer—any—*compensation*——"

Mrs. Jobson's face grew crimson beneath the paint and pearl powder—she fairly screamed with rage.

"Do you come here to *insult* us? to offer to bribe us to give up our daughter's future prospects for *money?*"

The poor Duchess was sorely embarrassed; she knew not what to say or do; how persuade these people to see reason. "Do pray

consider before you encourage your daughter to take a step which could only lead to misery. Lord Eliot's family would never receive her; they would have nothing to live on; in short, it would be a wretched business——"

"You can't prevent her being Marchioness of Eliot now, and Duchess of Skye hereafter! Mr. Jobson will not allow his daughter to starve, whatever you may do by your son!"

The Duchess felt flight was her only resource.

"It is useless our prolonging this interview," she said; "I will wish you good-morning." And, with a stately bow, she left the room, feeling that nothing had been gained by her most unpleasant mission. In deep dejection she returned to the hotel to give an account of her discomfiture to the Duke.

"Well, ma, is the old cat gone?" And Miss Maud Jobson thrust her head in at the door of the drawing-room, where her mother was walking up and down in a state of boiling indignation.

"To insult us by offering money! How dare she! You *shall* marry him!"

"No, ma; I've come to tell you that I shan't."

"Maud——" Mrs. Jobson sank into a chair, almost speechless.

"I never liked him. He's a namby-pamby nincompoop, and what's the good of being a marchioness with no money, and a family that won't recognise me? No, I'm not going to marry him, and there's an end of it!"

"Maud, you've been listening at the door."

"Of course I have. It was my business you were discussing. I'd a perfect right to listen."

Mrs. Jobson stormed and raged and fumed. To think that her daughter, for whom she had schemed so successfully, should turn traitor, and behave so scandalously.

"Do you think you'll pick up a greater catch, may I ask? Dukes are not as plentiful as blackberries. What will your father say?"

"I've told pa, and he says, 'All right.' He doesn't want me to marry a man I loathe and despise."

"You were quite willing to marry him at Nice."

"Well, it did seem rather fine; but I have thought better of it——"

"You've been meeting that wretched Alfred Robinson again," screamed Mrs. Jobson; "that's what's at the bottom of your disgraceful conduct."

"There's no disgrace about it, ma. Yes, I've seen Alf this morning, and we've settled it all, and pa's willing——"

"A horrid, low fellow; a miserable pill-mixer; this to replace the Marquis of Eliot——"

"Alf's a doctor, and he's worth two of the Marquis; and you'd better write and tell the Duchess that I've given up her son. Perhaps she'll send me a wedding present!" And with this parting shot Maud left the room.

Poor Mrs. Jobson! To think that all her grand visions of future glory as the mother of the Marchioness of Eliot and prospective Duchess of Skye should so suddenly collapse. Maud's engagement had been beyond her wildest dreams—a Marquis! and to think of that "obstinate, wretched, low-minded girl" (for thus Mrs. Jobson thought of her daughter now) throwing away such a chance, to marry Alfred Robinson, a young and struggling doctor.

"Wishing me, too, to write and tell the Duchess, after all her insolence to me! No, I won't. Let her find it out for herself——"

Mrs. Jobson's younger daughters, Louisa and Blanche, quite sympathised with their mother. Had the Marquis happened to fancy one of them, how differently they would have behaved.

"It is too odious of Maud," they cried. "She might think of us. We had so looked forward to her taking us about—even presenting us at Court—and now—oh! it is too selfish—we shall never be presented now."

This plaint of Louisa's suddenly inspired Mrs. Jobson with a bright idea. Ah! She would get something out of the broken engagement after all.

"Girls," she exclaimed, "we *shall* go to Court, and the Duchess of Skye shall present us!"

"Oh, ma! impossible!"

"Not at all. If Maud is determined to throw away such a splendid chance, she shall not be allowed to spoil all our prospects. I will write to the Duchess and say that, *on condition she presents us at the next drawing-room, Maud shall break off the engagement to her son.* No need to tell her that the silly girl intends to do so in any case; and we must make Maud promise to hold her tongue till after the drawing-room; there is one in a fortnight."

"Oh, ma, what a splendid idea. She must be quiet till after that. Do—do write at once."

Maud Jobson entered *con amore* into her mother's plan. She, too, would like to be presented. No one in their circle of acquaintances had ever penetrated the sacred precincts of Buckingham Palace. How the Joneses and Browns and Smiths would open their eyes.

"I don't mind pretending to be engaged to Eliot for so short a time, if I don't have to be bored with him too much," she said.

When the Duchess received Mrs. Jobson's letter her wrath and amazement were excessive. "That *I* should be asked to present that woman and her daughters! such impertinence! such presumption! Good heavens, what next!"

"Well, my dear aunt," said Lord George, who was with her at the moment: "it seems to me a lesser evil than that Eliot should marry into such a family. Very unpleasant, I allow—but still——"

"What is Mr. Jobson, George—one never hears of *him?*"

"Something in the city, I believe—and heaps of money."

"I have always so strongly disapproved of the influx of dreadful

people who have been received at Court within the last few years: people that have no claim, no right to force themselves into a place that *should* be select, but that, alas, is so no longer. How could I explain such a presentation to all those who have known how strongly I feel on the subject? No, no; I cannot submit to such degrading terms!"

"Don't write a refusal at once. I quite agree with all you say. It *is* impertinent—odious—but the alternative seems worse," said Lord George.

At the end of two days, the Duchess received a second note from Mrs. Jobson, which ran as follows:

"DEAR DUCHESS,—Not having as yet had any answer to my letter of the 10th, I write again, as time presses. The drawing-room is on the 22nd, and I must ask for an answer at once. Mr. Jobson does not like long engagements, and the Marquis is anxious that the wedding should take place next month, so there is no time to lose. *I must at once order Maud's trousseau* or *our trains*, and leave it to your grace to say which. "Truly yours,

"ARABELLA JOBSON."

The poor Duchess! she was indeed driven into a corner. She had always been so staunch an upholder of the aristocratic principles of her youth! And now that she should have to decide between the marriage of her son to Miss Maud Jobson, *or* the presentation by herself of this vulgar and obscure family! It was indeed a cruel dilemma.

Finally, Lord George was made the means of the negotiations. He called on Mrs. Jobson and informed her that the Duchess would consent to present her (and she could then present her daughters) on condition that Mrs. and Miss Jobson would give a written promise to release Lord Eliot from his engagement as soon as the drawing-room was over.

No sooner had Lord George left the house, than Mrs. and the Misses Jobson flew to their dressmaker, Mme. Frivole, where they spent many hours choosing the most magnificent dresses in which to appear before their Queen. The young ladies were to have white satin and pearls, and Mrs. Jobson selected for herself a brilliant green velvet train, to be trimmed with gold, and petticoat of rose-pink satin covered with many coloured beads. Then shoes, gloves, fans, etc., had to bought, bouquets ordered, an appointment made with a photographer to photograph the ladies in all their bravery: "in your largest size," said Mrs. Jobson importantly. The hairdresser had to be written to and engaged, also rooms taken at the Grosvenor Hotel. In fact, the arrangements kept the whole family in a state of pleasurable excitement for days.

Meantime the Duchess was in a most unhappy frame of mind; the worry and annoyance made her positively ill. She and the Duke

had now taken up their abode in London for the season, and she, too, had ordered her dress for the drawing-room. "Anything will do," she told her dressmaker, who stared in astonishment. Her grace was in the habit of taking much interest in her dress, and liked to exercise her individual taste considerably, but the whole business was such a humiliation to her this time that she could not bear to think of it. "Happily I have the entrée," she said to herself, "so shall merely walk through, and may never see those dreadful people at all."

Some few days before the drawing-room, Mrs. Jobson, who had, by diligent study of the *Court Circular*, acquired some insight into the necessary etiquette, wrote a note to the Duchess, to say that the names for the presentation cards were—"Mrs. James Jobson, Miss Jobson, Miss Louisa Jobson, Miss Blanche Jobson." This as a reminder.

The Duchess, indeed, required no reminder; the miserable subject engrossed her thoughts. She saw little of her son; he remained at Brighton, and she could not bear the society of even her closest friends. The morning Mrs. Jobson's note arrived, the Duchess wrote the customary intimation to the Lord Chamberlain that she meant to attend the drawing-room "and present Mrs. James Jobson." Having done this, she left the note on her table, meaning to send it in the afternoon, and ordered her carriage to drive to the park. Not very far from Skye House the carriage came to a sudden stop. The Duchess looked out to see the cause, and discovered a little crowd gathered in front of the church in that street. At that moment a lady in full bridal costume descended from a hired carriage and entered the church; as the Duchess caught sight of her she started and stared in astonishment. "Surely it is—no—it is impossible. *Is* it Miss Maud Jobson? Can it be she? Surely Eliot is not going to steal a march on us in this way. No bridesmaids, no wedding party. Oh! I must see," and hastily calling to her footman to open the carriage door, the Duchess alighted and entered the church. Yes! there was a wedding going on, but the tall, broad-shouldered young bridegroom bore no resemblance to her son, and the bride, could it be——

The Duchess listened eagerly for the names. "Alfred Robinson" and "Maud Jobson." Was it possible? might it not be some cousin with the same name? She would make sure.

As the newly-wedded pair were leaving the church, the Duchess stepped up to the astonished bride, who started and blushed. Yes! it must be the same Maud Jobson. Oh, what a relief!

"I can't understand," she exclaimed, feeling she must have some explanation.

"Oh! I am so sorry," cried the bride, almost in tears. "Ma will be so vexed."

"Come home with me at once," cried the Duchess, too much excited to weigh her words, and only feeling she must get to the bottom of the story. And before the bride or bridegroom could

speak, they were handed into the Duchess's brougham and whirled away to Skye House. "Home" being the order given to the astonished servants.

"Now explain," and the Duchess waved her hand to Maud and her husband to be seated.

"I never wanted to marry Lord Eliot," faltered the bride; "but ma thought it would be a grand marriage, and so we were engaged. But Alf and I always cared for each other, and when we returned from Nice, and I heard how the Marquis's family hated the thought of his marrying me, I told ma I would not marry him. But we all wanted to be presented, so ma said I must not break off my engagement till after the drawing-room. And then Alf got the promise of a good practice in India, but he must sail to-morrow, so—so we just ran away and were married. I made Frivole make a high body to my Court dress, and we were going back this afternoon to tell pa and ma. They'd have kept it quiet till after the 22nd; and we go off to-morrow. But now—oh! dear, what will ma say?"

The Duchess was so overjoyed at the new turn of affairs that she at once became both cordial and kind to the newly-married pair—whom she had taken such summary possession of. She gave them lunch, and then sent her carriage with them to the hotel they were staying at; and then, having first torn up the note to the Lord Chamberlain, herself drove to Messrs. Hancock and purchased a handsome diamond bracelet, which she sent "with best wishes from the Duke and Duchess of Skye, to Mrs. Alfred Robinson."

As to the Jobsons, their consternation was beyond words. A note from the Duchess "declining to present Mrs. and the Misses Jobson" arrived just before Maud (who had been supposed to be spending the day in London, shopping) and her husband appeared.

"Treacherous, under-handed minx," and other compliments were showered on the bride by her affectionate mother and sisters.

"Our trains have just come home ——"

"The bouquets ordered ——"

"The photographer ——"

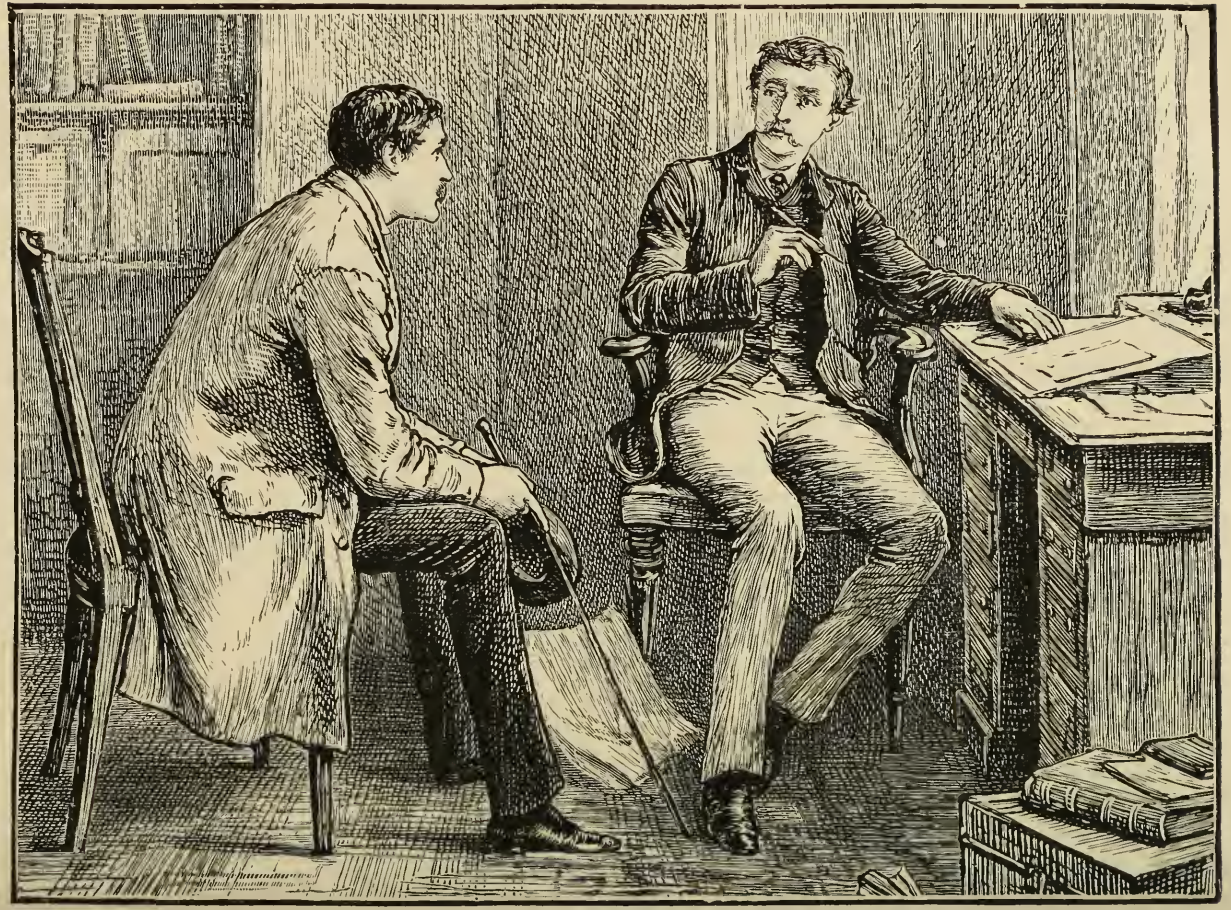
"What will the Joneses say ——?"

"And the Browns ——?"

"And the Smiths ——?"

"We shall never be presented now," and Mrs. Jobson and her daughters burst into floods of hysterical tears.

The Marquis of Eliot took his jilting very calmly. He declined to discuss the subject with his parents, who became more anxious than ever to see him "safely and suitably married."



THE

SUMMER NUMBER

OF

THE ARGOSY.

THE BRILLIANT KEEPER.

By Mrs. Henry Wood, Author of "East Lynne."

IT was a comfortable room, even for the West-end of London. It was not the grand drawing-room of the house; it was not the great dining-room, where Sir Philip's patients waited their turn to go in to him; it was only a small, cozy apartment, with a bright fire, easy-chairs, and generally plenty of litter. For a wonder it was tidy now; nothing was on the centre table except Lady Annesley's desk, at which she sat writing—a plain, pleasant woman of forty, wearing weeds yet. The late Sir Robert, a popular and successful physician, had risen in the world and earned his baronetcy; but this had been his second wife.

On a low sofa, near the fire, sat an old lady—a cheerful, nice old lady, in spite of her blindness and her eighty-four years. She would tell you, could you speak to her, that God had seen fit to take her dear son, Sir Robert, but she had been spared. Upon her lap was a bag made of white linen, resembling a pillow-case, but not so long; and she was stuffing it with handfuls of paper torn into minute bits. Since she had become blind she was wont to employ some of her time in tearing up waste-paper, newspapers and the like, to stuff cushions. Maria Carr, Lady Annesley's niece, was at the far window making the case for this cushion: two square pieces of white velvet, on each of which was painted an exquisite group of flowers, Maria's doing. The cushion was intended as a present for Mary Annesley, who was on the point of marriage with Dr. Scott. She had gone out now with the late Sir Robert Annesley's ward, Georgina Livingston, who lived with them.

Mrs. Annesley looked up from her cushion and her bits of paper —if the expression may be applied to one who is blind; but when she spoke to people, she was in the habit of turning her face in the direction she thought they might be, just as she had done before the darkness came on.

"What about Charley's going to church? Is it decided?"

"Well, I suppose ——"

Lady Annesley stopped. The door had hastily opened, and a gentleman entered—a tall, fine man. But for the sweet smile that frequently parted his lips and lighted up his dark blue eyes, his features might have been thought plain. And yet, ladies were apt to say that Sir Philip Annesley, being unmarried, was too attractive for a medical man.

"Is that Philip?"

"Myself and no one else, grandmamma." For Sir Philip sometimes, half in sport, addressed her by the old familiar title of his boyhood. "Who will lend me a finger?"

"A finger!" echoed Lady Annesley. "What for? Ask Maria."

Maria laid down her velvet, and came forward. Sir Philip opened a little square box, and taking out a ring, passed it on to the third or wedding-finger of her left hand. She stood before him, perfectly quiet in motion and bearing, but blushing to the very roots of her hair. Two thin chains of gold crossed and re-crossed each other, enclosing a brilliant between each crossing—twelve brilliants in all, small, but of the first water—a jewel of rare beauty, remarkably light and elegant.

"Philip, what a lovely ring!" exclaimed Lady Annesley.

"Yes; it took my fancy. Mary will like a keeper, and Scott, in his absent fashion, is sure not to think of one. Lucky, I say, if he remembers the wedding-ring. It is too large; is it not, Maria?"

"Much too large for a keeper. Mary would need another ring to keep this one on."

"I ought to have chosen the smaller one," said Sir Philip. "There is another, just like it, but less in size. I'll take this one back and change it."

"It must have cost a good deal?" said Lady Annesley.

"Pretty well. Seventy guineas."

Mrs. Annesley lifted her hands in dismay. "Oh, Philip! Seventy guineas for a ring! It seems next door to a sin. Your father, my dear, would have looked twice at half the money before giving it."

He crossed the room and put the keeper into her hand, bending down to her, and speaking gently. "Feel it, grandmother; it really is a beauty. I know the price is considerable; but we do not give away Mary every day."

Mrs. Annesley passed her fingers over the ring, after the manner of the blind, and handed it back to him. "Philip, when do you intend to buy a wedding keeper on your own account? Ever?"

That sweet smile of his rose to his lips, and perhaps the least tinge of colour to his face.

"A doctor has no time to think of such things."

"No time?" returned the old lady, taking the remark literally. "I think he has as much time for it as other people. Where there's

a will there's a way. Philip, do you know that you are in your thirty-fifth year?"

"And do you know also what your patients say?" put in Lady Annesley. "They say ——"

"I can guess what they say: that will do!" interrupted Sir Philip, with a laugh. "If they don't like an unmarried man, they need not come to me. Let them go elsewhere."

"Not they," said Lady Annesley, significantly. "Philip, you really ought to marry. Delay it another ten years, and your children will be growing up when you are an old man. I wish you would: it would set my mind at rest."

"At rest from what?" asked Sir Philip, in hasty and somewhat sharp tones.

"Oh, well; I am not going to explain," answered Lady Annesley. "At rest in more ways than one."

"Provided, I presume, that I married to please you," cried Sir Philip, who fully understood the by-play.

"Of course not to please me, Philip—I am no one. To please your sisters, and to please the world."

"Terrible if I married only to please myself, would it not be, Lady Annesley?" he laughed.

He had never called her "mother:" at one time had studiously called her "Lady Annesley." Four-and-twenty years of age when his father married this, his second wife, Philip, in his inmost heart, had rebelled at the union. They had all done so, at first; but they learnt to like her in time. The girls were married now, excepting Mary, who would be the last to leave the old home.

"It is no joking matter, Philip. What a nice rose that is in your button-hole!" continued Lady Annesley. "Where did you get it?"

"Out of Mrs. Leigh's conservatory," he replied, taking it from his coat—a magnificent white rose, beautiful as a camelia. "She seduced me into it just now, when I was at her house."

"Is her daughter better?"

"No, poor girl. And I fear——"

Sir Philip did not say what he feared. He was not one to speak, at home, of his patients. In the silence that ensued a servant appeared.

"Lady Oliver, sir."

Sir Philip nodded; stood a moment or two, as if in thought; then prepared to descend.

"Will you put this up for me?" he said, giving the brilliant keeper to Lady Annesley as he passed her. "I will change it when I go out again. There, Maria; a present for you."

He flung the white rose into Maria's lap. She did not touch it, only let it lie there, her cheeks again growing hot. Lady Annesley knitted her brow. But it cleared as her eyes fell on the ring.

"I never did see a greater beauty!" she enthusiastically exclaimed,

as she slipped it several times on and off her finger. "But what a judge Philip must have been to buy it so large as this! Who is this coming up?"

It was Charles Carr, Maria's brother, popularly known in the house as "Charley." A young lieutenant, he; gay, careless and handsome. Often in scrapes, always in trouble; deep in debt, in "bills," in many things that he ought not to be; altogether, a gentleman who was believed to be going to the bad headlong, especially by Lady Annesley. He was her own nephew, her dead brother's son; and he came to the house, presuming upon the relationship and upon Maria's residence in it, oftener than Lady Annesley liked. A great fear was at her heart that he had grown too fond of Georgina Livingston, or that Georgina had of him—perhaps both. *Her* penniless nephew, who had not cross or coin to bless himself with, steal Georgina and her nine hundred a year! The world *would* talk then—would say that she, Lady Annesley, had planned it! And Lady Annesley was remarkably sensitive to the world's censure.

Charley glittered in, in full regimentals; one of the handsomest young fellows that had ever bowed before Her Majesty at St. James's. And he had no objection that someone else should see him and think so.

"Where's Georgina?" asked he.

"Georgina's out," snappishly replied Lady Annesley. "What are you dressed up for?"

"I have just come from the Levee. Did you forget it?" he returned, mechanically taking up the little jewel-box and opening it. Charley's fingers had a trick of touching things, and he often received a rap on the knuckles for it, literally and metaphorically, from my lady. "What a splendid ring!" he uttered.

"Sir Philip's present to Mary. But it is to be changed; it is too large."

Charley put it on his little finger and turned it round admiringly; as they had all done. "A charming ring!" he repeated. "It is really beautiful."

"Do you not wish it were yours?" laughed Maria, from her distant window.

"I wish I had the cost of it," he said. "That would be of more use to me. What was it? A hundred guineas?"

"Not a bad guess," said Lady Annesley, who really liked Charley, and his good looks, and his good nature, au fond, when she could forget the fear and trouble touching Miss Georgina.

They stood together, singing praises of the ring; now she had it on—now he. Lady Annesley at length took it from him, and held it over the open box, as if taking a farewell of it before she dropped it in.

"Oh, dear!" cried Mrs. Annesley.

Lady Annesley hastily put the lid on, left the box on the table by

Charley, and ran to her mother-in-law. The old lady had dropped the sack upon the hearthrug, and some of the ammunition was falling out.

"Don't trouble yourself, my dear," she said, as Lady Annesley began putting it in. "Put it on my lap again; I won't be so clumsy a second time. It is nearly full, you see."

Lady Annesley did as requested, and returned to the table. Charley, restless Charley, was then standing by Maria, and the two were whispering together. Lady Annesley took a sheet of fair white paper and wrapped up the little box, without again looking in it, lighted a wax match, and sealed it.

"Well, I must be off," cried Charles. "Shall you be at home this evening?"

"*I* shall," laughed grandmamma, from her place on the sofa. "I don't suppose many of the others will be out." She had not penetrated to Lady Annesley's fear; and Charley was a wonderful favourite of hers.

"Look, Maria," said Lady Annesley, as they heard Charley and his sword clattering down the stairs two at a time: "I will put it here. If Philip should come for it, you can tell him where it is."

She lifted the lid of her desk and put in the little box; then approached Mrs. Annesley and took her arm to lead her from the room. "We shall have no drive to-day unless we make haste. Maria will finish that."

"It's quite finished, all but tacking," said the old lady. "It is as full as it ought to be. Maria, my dear, will you come and do it at once."

Maria carried her velvet to the sofa, and began to complete the cushion, kneeling down for convenience sake. She had put the velvet cover upon it, and was beginning to put round the gold cord and to sew on the tassels, when Sir Philip entered. He rested his arms on the back of the sofa, and looked down at her and her work—a fair girl she, with a sweet and gentle face.

"I wonder if folk would send *me* presents if I set up housekeeping on my own score?" cried he.

"You had better try them," said Maria. But she spoke the words without thought, and felt, the moment they had left her lips, that she had rather have bitten out her tongue than have uttered them.

"But the flitting from the house for all of you, what a trouble it would be!" returned he, in tones of remonstrance. "I don't know that everyone of you would have to go, though," he continued, whilst the too-conscious crimson dyed her face, and she played nervously with the gold cord.

"Certainly not, if Lady Annesley had her way," he resumed. Maria, astonished at the words, glanced at him in amazement. "Don't you see it all, Maria?"

"See what?" she exclaimed.

"Nay, I shall not tell you. So much the better if you have not seen it. I thought it had been patent to the house. My vanity may be in error, after all."

"What *do* you mean, Sir Philip?"

He was gazing hard at her with his deep blue eyes—vain and saucy enough they were, just then. She felt completely at sea.

"Give me your opinion, Maria. If I did resolve to set up housekeeping for myself, do you think that any one of you could be induced to remain and help me in it?"

Her heart beat violently—her eyes fell. The gold cord in her fingers was wreathing itself into knots. Sir Philip came round and laid his hand upon her shoulder as she knelt, making her turn her face to him.

"Because I may be asking the question some day. Do you know where Lady Annesley put the ring?"

She sprang up, opened the desk, and gave the parcel to him, sealed as Lady Annesley had left it. He slipped it into his waistcoat pocket, went down to his brougham, and drove off.

In less than twenty minutes he was back again, and came flying up the stairs as fast as Charley Carr had flown down them.

"A pretty simpleton you made of me, Maria—giving me an empty box!"

"An empty box!" she echoed.

He took the box out of his pocket, and held it open before her.

"I told the man I had brought back the ring to exchange for the smaller one, opened the box very gingerly to hand it to him, and behold there was nothing in it."

"Did you open the box in the brougham?" she asked.

"I never touched it after you saw me put it in my pocket until I was in the shop. I unsealed the paper before the shopman's eyes."

"Then where can it be?" exclaimed Maria. "Lady Annesley certainly sealed it up, and put it herself in the desk, ready for you. No one went near the desk afterwards—no one came into the room, or was in the room, but myself."

"Lady Annesley must have sealed up an empty box, that's clear," said Sir Philip. "I have brought the other ring."

But Lady Annesley, when she entered, protested that she had not sealed up an empty box—the ring was in it. And she related the details to Sir Philip, as they have been given above. The box, she said, was not out of her hand a minute altogether.

"Are you sure you put it *in?*—that you did not let it slip aside?" questioned Sir Philip.

"Sure!" repeated Lady Annesley, half inclined to resent the implied carelessness; "I am quite sure. And, had the ring slipped aside, it would only have gone on to the table. I put it in safely, and shut it in."

"Who was in the room, besides yourselves?" asked Sir Philip.

"Only Charley Carr. He was standing by me, wishing that the ring were his."

"No," cried out Mrs. Annesley, innocently; "wishing its value were his. The more sensible wish of the two."

A wild, sickening sensation darted to Maria Carr's brain. It was not yet a suspicion; it was a fear lest suspicion should come: nay, a foreboding that it *was* coming.

The suspicion did come: came immediately, to all of them. In vain Sir Philip suggested that Charles must have done it in a joke, to give Lady Annesley a fright, for he was as full of tricks as a monkey—he would bring it back with him in the evening. That he had taken the ring from the box there was no doubt whatever; and Lady Annesley, in her anger, refused to be pacified.

She attacked Charles the moment he made his appearance. "Where's that keeper?" she sternly demanded, without circumlocution.

"What keeper?" returned Charles.

"The brilliant keeper, that you made off with to-day."

"I don't know what you mean, aunt."

Lady Annesley flew into a rage. "I left the box close to your hands when I turned to pick up the cushion for Mrs. Annesley. How dared you take the ring out!"

"Let's see whether I have it about me," retorted Charley, in a careless, indifferent, provoking manner, as he made a show of feeling in all his pockets. "Oh—I must have left it in my regimentals."

Lady Annesley nearly boiled over. Words led to words; Charles grew angry in his turn; and at length she hinted that he must have *stolen* the ring. He declared he had not touched the box, or the ring; that he had turned from the table when Lady Annesley did so, and remained talking to Maria whilst the cushion was being picked up; and he swore to this with sundry unorthodox words, forgetting that he was not in quarters, but in a lady's drawing-room.

"If no one takes his part, I will!" hotly cried Georgina Livingston, after Charles had dashed away from the house, promising that he would never enter it again; and her countenance was distressed, and her cheeks were scarlet, as she said it. "Steal a ring! You may just as well accuse me, Lady Annesley, as accuse him; I should be the more likely of the two to do it."

"Do, pray, recollect yourself, Georgina!" remonstrated my lady. "Is this avowal seemly in a young girl?"

"I don't care whether it's seemly or unseemly," responded Miss Georgina, dashing away some tears. "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, all of you! Because Charley happens not to be made of money, you turn against him, and think he'd *take* it. I'll let him know that *I* don't think so."

Hot words, hotly spoken. A few days, and even Georgina was

obliged to judge him less leniently. Sir Philip chose quietly to investigate the suspicion; and he ascertained that Charles had, the very evening after the loss of the ring, and the following day, paid sundry small debts, for which he had been long dunned. Twenty pounds, at least, of these payments were traced, and then Sir Philip dropped the search. Why pursue it? It was all too clear, for Charles had no resources of his own to draw upon.

But here Maria stepped in to his defence. She protested with earnestness, with tears, that she had furnished him herself with twenty pounds; that she had given it to him in that moment when they were whispering together. She knew Charles's wants, she said, and had been saving this money up for him. Lady Annesley flatly contradicted Maria. It did not stand to reason, she contended, that Maria, with her limited means, could save up twenty pounds, or even ten. The thing was almost against possibility; and Maria fell under nearly as great a ban as her brother for attempting to screen him by falsehood. There were moments when, in her own sick heart, Maria did believe him to be guilty. Such things had been heard of in the world—done in the recklessness of necessity.

A twelvemonth passed away—and a twelvemonth brings changes with it. Georgina Livingston was of age now, and at liberty to choose her own residence. She was alone in the drawing-room one April evening. Mrs. Annesley was much confined to her chamber, and Lady Annesley had gone up to her. Sir Philip came in.

"Alone, Georgina! Why! what is the matter?—crying?"

"Oh, Lady Annesley set me on!" was the young lady's pettish rejoinder, as she brushed the tears away. "She was angry with me for 'moping,' as she called it; and I told her I would not stay here to be grumbled at."

"Why do you mope?" he asked.

"Because I choose," was the wilful retort. "I *can* leave now if I like, you know, Philip."

"If you like—yes," assented Sir Philip. "Where should you go?"

"I don't know, and I don't much care," dreamily responded Georgina.

"Would you like to remain in the house for good?" resumed Sir Philip, after a pause. "I was thinking of asking you to do so."

A faint blush rose to her face, but she showed no other emotion: and his tone, considering the momentous words, was wonderfully calm. Perhaps both had been conscious for some little time that these words would be spoken. Sir Philip bent his head towards her.

"The world has reproached me with not marrying. Help me, Georgina, to put the reproach away! There is no one I would ask to be my wife but you."

"Listen, Philip!" she exclaimed, pushing back her hair, and turning her face, full of its own eager excitement, towards him—excitement not caused by him. "I will speak out the truth to you; I could not to everyone: but you are good and true and noble. Were I to say to you 'Yes,' and let you take me, believing that I loved you, I should simply be acting a lie. I loved someone else; I am trying to forget him with my whole heart and might—but I did love him."

"Who was this?"

"Charles Carr."

Sir Philip's blue eyes flashed with a peculiar light, and he looked into the fire—not at Georgina.

"That love ought to end," he said. "It can bring you no good."

"Don't I tell you that it has ended—that I am putting it from me as fast as I can. But the remembrance cannot go all at once. I did love him; and I believe it was your generosity in hushing up his dreadful disgrace instead of proclaiming it and prosecuting him that first made me like you more than usual."

"You acknowledge, then, that you do like me?" smiled Sir Philip.

"Very—very much."

"Well enough to take me for better or for worse?"

"Yes; if, after this confession, you would still wish it."

"I do," he answered, drawing her to him, and taking his first kiss from her lips. Georgina flew to her room, and there burst into a flood of tears.

Lady Annesley was strangely elated at the news. She had hoped for it in her inmost heart—long and long.

"You have done well, Philip," she said to her step-son.

"I shall escape the worrying about not getting married, at any rate," responded Sir Philip.

"Philip"—lowering her voice confidentially—"do you know, I frightened myself to death, at one time, lest you should marry Maria. I fancied you were growing attached to her; and people would have said I had worked for it."

The red colour flashed into Sir Philip's face. "I should have married her, but for that affair of the diamond keeper."

Lady Annesley looked blank. "Did you like her so much as that?"

"Like her!" he echoed, in emotion, "I *loved* her. I am not sure but I love her still. Why, Lady Annesley, I *all but* asked her to be my wife the very afternoon that wretched boy did the mischief."

"I'm sure I am very glad he did do it, if it prevented that," retorted my lady.

"I might have got over that; his fault; but I could not get over Maria's. To uphold him in his deceit—to invent a falsehood to screen him—how could I make her my wife after that?"

"What is there about Maria to like?" fretfully interrupted Lady Annesley.

"She's more *likeable* than anyone in this world, to my thinking——"

"Hush, Philip!"

The news of the engagement went forth to the house. Maria had still remained in it, making herself useful, as she had done before, especially to Mrs. Annesley, for she had no other home. Better she had quitted it: to see Sir Philip daily was not the way to cure her love for him.

"I hope you will be happy, Sir Philip; I wish you every happiness," she stammered, believing it was incumbent on her to say something to him to that effect. But Sir Philip observed that her face turned white with emotion as she spoke.

"Thank you; I hope we shall be," he coldly replied; and, since that unhappy episode, he had never spoken to her *but* coldly. "Georgina Livingston possesses one great essential towards making herself and others happy—truth."

The preparations for the wedding went briskly on. Lady Annesley would first move into another residence. No change had been made since Sir Robert's death, but Sir Philip must have his house to himself now. One evening Sir Philip was spending an hour with Dr. Scott. A navy surgeon was also there—Mr. Blake, once their chum at Bartholomew's: and Georgina was sitting upstairs with Mary Scott and her baby.

"Is smoking allowed here?" asked the surgeon—glancing at the elegant sofa on which he sat, where was displayed that beautiful cushion painted by Maria Carr. "I'm good for nothing without my pipe."

Receiving assent, he lighted it, and then crossed the room to Sir Philip and the doctor, who stood at the window. There was some disturbance in the street, and they all three remained there chatting and looking out.

Suddenly a burst of light shot up in the twilight of the room, and they wheeled round in consternation. A blaze was ascending from the velvet cushion. They caught up the hearthrug and succeeded in putting out the fire. Georgina Livingston, hearing the commotion, came in with a white face.

In lighting his pipe, Mr. Blake must have suffered a spark to fall upon the cushion. There it had smouldered, penetrating at length to the stuffing, which then blazed up. You may remember that it consisted of paper.

"Oh, that lovely cushion!" lamented Georgina.

"What's this?" uttered Dr. Scott, picking up something bright and glistening from the ashes. "If I don't believe it's a ring!"

A ring it was. The lost, the beautiful, the brilliant keeper! The eyes of Sir Philip and Georgina met.

Maria was, that same evening, sitting alone ; she and her breaking heart. It had felt breaking ever since that cloud fell upon it. She heard Sir Philip come home—and she began gathering her work together.

"Don't run away, Maria ; I have something to tell you ! "

She looked at him in wonderment. His voice wore the same loving tone as in days gone by ; a tone long past, for her.

"Lend me your hand, Maria ! " And, without waiting for assent, he took it in his, the left hand, and slipped upon the third finger, as he had done once before, the diamond keeper. "Do you recognise it ? "

"It is Mrs. Scott's," replied Maria. "Why have you brought it here, Sir Philip ? "

"It is not Mrs. Scott's : it is larger than hers. Do not remove it, Maria. It shall be your own keeper, if you will let me add the wedding-ring."

Confused, bewildered, wondering what it meant, wondering at the strangely loving expression that gleamed on her from his dark blue eyes, she burst into tears. Was he saying this to mock her ?

No : not to mock her. No ! Sir Philip wound his arms round her as he told the tale ; he drew her face to his breast, his eyelashes glistening in the intensity of his emotion. "I can never let you go again, my darling ! I do not ask your forgiveness ; I know that you will give it me unasked, for you and I have been alike miserable."

"Charley innocent !—been innocent all this time ? " she gasped.

"He has, in good truth ! We must try and make it up to him. I ——"

"Oh, Philip ! " she interrupted, with streaming eyes ; "you will believe me now ! I did give him the twenty pounds—I did indeed ! I had saved in so many trifles : I had made old gowns look like new ones ; all for him. *You* should not have doubted me, if the rest did."

"My whole life shall atone to you, Maria," he softly whispered. "Georgina —— "

She broke from him, her cheeks flushing crimson. In the moment's bewilderment she had totally forgotten his engagement to Georgina. He laughed merrily, his eyes dancing, and drew her to him again.

"Never fear that I am about to turn Mormon, and marry you both ! Georgina has given me up, Maria. In the excitement caused by the discovery, she spoke her mind out to me ; declared that she did not like me, with all her 'trying,' half as well as she did Charley Carr ; and that none but Charley should be her husband. Scott has gone to tell Charley the news, and bring him up. If —— "

"What on earth is this ? " ejaculated Lady Annesley, as she came in and stood as one petrified.

"It's this," replied Sir Philip, holding out Maria's hand, on which shone the brilliant keeper. "This mischief-making ring has turned up again. When you held it that day over the open box, and Mrs. Annesley called out, there can be no doubt that you, in the hurry, unconsciously slipped it on to your finger, instead of into the box, and lost it off your finger again immediately amongst the paper stuffing. The cushion has just given up its prey."

Lady Annesley sank upon the first seat, with a very crest-fallen expression. "I never heard of such a thing!" she stammered. "*My* finger! What will be the consequence? Poor Charley!"

"The consequence, I expect, will be that you will have two weddings instead of one," laughed Sir Philip. "Georgina has proclaimed *her* intentions, and I don't suppose Charley will bear malice. I think I ought to have given the ring to him as a memento, instead of to Maria."

"To Maria!" irascibly returned Lady Annesley, not precisely understanding him, but feeling uncomfortable. "What need is there to give it to her, Sir Philip?"

"Great need," he replied, his tone becoming serious. "But it is even with a condition—that I add one of plain gold to it. Ah! Lady Annesley, we cannot be false to ourselves, try as we will. Maria has remained my best and dearest love up to this hour, cajole and deceive my heart as I would. And now, I trust, she will remain so, as long as time shall last!"

"FORSAN ET HAEC OLIM MEMINISSE JUVABIT."—*Virgil.*

WHETHER or no we shall roam the hereafter
Together, as once in the days that are dead,
I hold that this life, with its tears and its laughter,
Is blessed, thrice blest, for the love that it bred.

What? Doubt, do I doubt? Do I sing as uncertain
Our love, song and rapture exhausted by death?
No, no, they survive, and death is but the curtain
Which is dropt, for a space, to give singers their breath.

Yes, yes, we shall meet at this life's seeming ending,
Love more, and not less, not forgetting nor dazed,
We have lived, we have loved, and in measure ascending,
We shall live, we shall love, when the curtain is raised.

JOHN JERVIS BERESFORD, M.A.

MRS. FANSHAW'S STRATAGEM.

By T. W. Speight, Author of "The Mysteries of Heron Dyke."

I.

WHEN, one morning, among the batch of letters on my breakfast-table, I found one addressed to me in a peculiar cramped hand, bearing the Dale End postmark, and sealed with a great splash of red wax which bore the evident impress of a thimble, something seemed to tell me that the writer of it could be none other than dear, good-hearted old Martha Barnet, my uncle's housekeeper at Brooklands. And so, indeed, it proved to be. Here is what Martha had to say to me:

"Dear Mr. Edward,—Things is as bad as bad can be at Brooklands. I'm right-down unappy in my mind. Mr. T. is wasted to a skeleton and hardly eats enuff to keep a baby alive. For the last month he has only been twice out of his own rooms, once for a short drive and once to sit for half-an-hour in the garden. Either *she* or her son is always on guard, and nobody but Doctor Dowse (who's an old woman if ever there was one) is let go near him. Do, Mr. Edward, try and come down and see for yourself. You ought to. You are his own sister's son, and poor dear master's only living relation—for I count her as nobody. Plese excuse this. From your humble servant,

"Martha Barnet."

Martha's homely effusion at once puzzled and alarmed me. In the first place it pre-supposed a knowledge on my part which I was not possessed of. Who was the mysterious *she*, and her equally mysterious son, of whom Martha made mention as being in attendance on my uncle. I knew nothing of the existence of any such persons. Had my uncle been a younger man, and not the confirmed misogynist he was, I might have thought that he had been inveigled into the toils of some adventuress, and in a moment of weakness made her his wife; but, knowing him as I did, such an idea was beyond belief.

My uncle, Mr. Jacob Trent, at this time was close upon seventy years of age. Up to his sixty-sixth year he had been an active business man, mixed up in various mercantile pursuits. Then had come a severe illness, and on his recovery he had at once retired into private life; going, after a time, to live at Brooklands, a place he had bought some years before, in the romantic district of Dale End. My uncle was not one of those men to whom one's affections seem to go out in the natural course of things. He was hard, stern and unbending in all the relations of life, repellent in some of them I do

not doubt. But with this he was a thoroughly just man, high-principled in his own fashion, and although he regarded money with an almost miserlike affection, I do not believe that he would knowingly have wronged any man to the extent of a shilling, even if he could thereby have put a hundred pounds into his own pocket.

Everyone respected Jacob Trent, but those who could have conscientiously said that they liked him were, I am afraid, few and far between.

I, Edward Protheroe, was the son of his only sister, who was twenty years younger than himself, and of whom he was said to have been fonder than of anyone else in the world up to the time of her committing the—from his point of view—unpardonable imprudence of marrying my father. From that date he refused to see her, or acknowledge her in any way. But when, some ten years later, she died—my father having pre-deceased her a couple of years—he did not refuse the guardianship of her son, which her last dying wish had imposed upon him. But, indeed, it was a trust which cost him little either in the way of trouble or expense. The interest of the little fortune left by my mother sufficed for the cost of my education, while all my vacations, with the exception of a week once a year, were spent with some of my father's relations in Devon. That one week at Christmas passed with my uncle in his great gloomy house in Bloomsbury was always a trial to me, and I fancy that my presence at such times was not much less of an infliction to him; but he deemed it his duty to have me there; and there, perforce, I had to be.

So the years went on till I was twenty-one and my uncle sixty-six, and then came the illness of which mention has been made. At that time I was just thinking about entering myself at one of the Inns of Court, but had not taken any decisive steps in the matter. It was in response to a message from Martha Barnet that I found myself inside my uncle's house, which I had not entered since the preceding Christmas. The doctor had advised my being sent for, whether with or against his patient's wishes I had no means of knowing; but, be that as it may, my uncle never expressed the least surprise at seeing me installed day after day by his bedside. One thing he had strongly objected to, and that was to having a trained nurse to wait upon him; and it may be, perhaps, that he only tolerated my presence as the lesser evil of the two.

As soon as he was sufficiently recovered to travel he hired a male attendant and started for the sea-side, while I went back to my own avocations. A year passed before I saw him again, by which time he had gone to live at Brooklands. In the interim he seemed to me to have aged greatly. The old reserve was still there, but in a modified degree, and during that week's visit we seemed brought more closely together than we had ever been before. A year later I spent another week with him, but when the third year came round I waited in vain for the invitation, without which I had never presumed to visit him.

Months passed, but still it came not, and now that the holiday season had come round, I made up my mind to pay an uninvited visit to Brooklands and find out the meaning of my uncle's strange silence.

Although Martha's letter, coming at such an opportune moment, served to hurry my preparations to some extent, it was not till the fourth day after its receipt that I found myself at Dale End. It was a fortunate chance which threw Martha in my way as I was on my road to Brooklands, after having left my bag in the station cloak-room. The dear old body fairly gasped with delight.

"Oh, Mr. Edward, but I *am* pleased and thankful to see you!" she exclaimed, and with that she drew me a little way aside and went on to enlighten me as to all that had happened since I was last at Brooklands.

It appeared that nearly a year previously my uncle had been called upon by a certain Mrs. Fanshaw, a widow, who gave it out that she was a half-cousin of Mr. Trent. My uncle, in the first instance, had invited her to stay a few days; but the "few days" had by this time extended themselves to eleven months, and according to Martha's account, it was evident that the widow had concluded to make Brooklands her home for the remaining term of its owner's natural life.

But not content with that, she had, in the course of the summer, succeeded in installing her grown-up son there as well as herself. Between them they had contrived to reduce my uncle to the position of a nonentity in his own house, and so great had the widow's influence over him become by this time that no visitor was admitted to see him without her sanction, nor was he ever allowed to leave the house, either for a walk or a drive, without being accompanied either by her or her son. But the worst feature of Martha's news, although merely confirmatory of what she had told me in her letter, was that, both physically and mentally, my uncle was growing weaker day by day. Finally, the faithful old housekeeper gave it as her opinion that any attempt I might make to see him would be frustrated in one way or another by Mrs. Fanshaw.

But that had yet to be proved.

Leaving Martha, I went on my way to Brooklands. I was shown into a sitting-room, where Mrs. Fanshaw presently came to me.

She was a woman whose age was probably nearer fifty than forty, with regular features of a slightly aquiline type, and at one time could doubtless have prided herself on her good looks. Now, however, her complexion was less a work of nature than of art; her eyebrows, too, bore evident traces of manipulation, while her hair was so uncompromisingly black that it was difficult to resent the suspicion that it was dyed. Her eyes, of a curious slaty grey, looked at you with a cold, scrutinising suspicion, as though she were debating in her mind whether every sentence you gave utterance to might not possibly veil a lie. I have rarely met with eyes which affected me so disagreeably as did those of Mrs. Fanshaw. In person she was tall, thin and

somewhat angular. She wore a black dress of some soft, clinging material and a sort of semi-widow's cap, which, however, gave one the effect of being strangely out of keeping with her too palpably rouged and powdered cheeks.

"You are Mr. Edward Protheroe?" she said, as she came forward, and my answer to which was a frigid bow. "I am the widow of Captain Fanshaw and half-cousin to Mr. Trent, so that you and I can claim in some sort to be relatives," she continued, with a smile which divided for a moment the thin line of her lips.

"You do me too much honour, madam. I never had the pleasure of hearing your name till to-day. But the object of my visit to Brooklands is to see my uncle, who, I am given to understand, is exceedingly ill." I felt that my speech was blunt even to the verge of rudeness, but there was something about the woman that seemed to set my moral fibre on edge.

"Then I am much afraid, Mr. Protheroe, that your errand will prove a fruitless one," she answered, flashing a dangerous gleam at me from the half-veiled depths of her eyes.

"In what way fruitless, madam? I presume that my uncle has not declined to see me?"

"Then, sir, your presumption carries you a little too far. Your uncle *has* declined to see you, and has desired me to intimate the fact to you. But even were it otherwise, the state of his health is such as to utterly preclude him from being seen by anyone except those immediately in attendance on him. The doctor's orders on that point are peremptory. At every risk he must be saved from worry and annoyance of even the most trifling kind."

"But I altogether fail to see, Mrs. Fanshaw, in what way my presence could prove a source either of worry or annoyance to my uncle. He and I have always been on the best of terms, and during his previous illness——"

"Is it worth while, Mr. Protheroe, to argue the point any further in the face of Mr. Trent's own decision in the matter? It seems to me a pure waste of time and words."

And so, indeed, it was. Two minutes later I found myself outside the house, the widow's parting words being: "Should your uncle at any time change his mind about seeing you, I will not fail at once to drop you a line to that effect." But that any such "line" would be received by me I was not so simple as to expect.

As I was passing, moodily enough, through the grounds on my way out, I encountered a young fellow coming from the opposite direction, who favoured me with a hard, cold stare as he passed. He was rather short in stature and somewhat thick-set, with a commonplace type of face and thick eyebrows. An indefinable but subtle likeness to Mrs. Fanshaw proclaimed him to be none other than her son.

A few minutes later Martha pounced on me from a shop where she had been lying in wait. I suppose the expression of my face told its

own tale. "I knew as well as well, Mr. Edward, that that cat wouldn't let you go anigh my poor, dear master," she exclaimed. "But what lie did she put you off with?"

"She told me, in the first place, that my uncle altogether refuses to see me; and, in the second, that, even were he willing to see me, he is too ill to do so."

"As if the sight of your face wouldn't do him more good than all the doctor's stuff in the world! But I don't for one moment believe she let him know you were in the house. He will never be told—at least not by her—that you've come all the way from London on purpose to see him."

"Then what's to be done? You urged me strongly to come, but it seems to me that I might just as well have stayed at home."

"Don't say that, Mr. Edward; please don't! I felt that you ought to know how things was going on, and though I was nearly sure the widow would try to keep you and your uncle apart, I thought that your young wits would hit on some way of circumventing her."

I shook my head. It seemed to me that to circumvent Mrs. Fanshaw would prove no easy matter.

Then Martha went on to tell me something she had forgotten at our first interview. It was to the effect that Dr. Dowse, my uncle's usual medical attendant, had fallen ill four days before, and that Dr. Terrill, a much younger and more energetic man, was attending to his patients for the time being. "And I feel sure that Mrs. Fanshaw doesn't like him half as well as she liked the old doctor," added Martha. "He asks too many questions to please madam."

Martha's words gave me an idea. Why not see this Dr. Terrill, tell him what object had brought me to Dale End, and ascertain from him the truth as to my uncle's condition? Two hours later I carried my suddenly-formed resolution into effect.

Dr. Terrill, whose face I took a liking to the moment I set eyes on it, listened with the utmost attention to what I had to say. When I had done, he said, as he turned from the desk at which he had been writing:

"Supposing Mr. Trent to be willing to see you, I know of no reason why he should not do so, for although he is undoubtedly very ill, he is not so much so as to be unable to receive a visitor, especially a relative like yourself, whose coming, one would think from what you tell me, ought to be a pleasure to him rather than the reverse. But, of course, on the other hand, should he really have expressed himself as disinclined to see you, it would be most unwise on your part, and might result in consequences for which I could not be responsible, for you to attempt to force your way into his presence."

"No such thought, Dr. Terrill, has ever entered my mind."

He paced the room for a few moments with his hands buried in his pockets. Then he said: "I will tell you what I will do for you,

Mr. Protheroe. To-morrow, when I visit your uncle, I will take an opportunity of mentioning the fact of your presence at Dale End, and ask him whether it is really his wish that you should not call upon him. Afterwards, I will either see you, or drop a note to your hotel, and let you know the result."

I thanked him warmly for his kindness.

"In view of the fact of your being Mr. Trent's nephew," he went on presently, "I may mention to you that there are certain features of his illness which puzzle me extremely. For instance, I find nothing in his general condition to account for the slow, gradual decay of vital power observable in him, which must have been going on for some time before I took his case over from Dr. Dowse. I have changed his medicine twice already, and if, on visiting him to-morrow, I find no mitigation of his symptoms, I shall probably change it again. But, as I said before, I'm puzzled."

After a little further conversation, I took my leave.

All this happened on the Wednesday. In the course of Thursday forenoon the following note from Dr. Terrill reached me:—

"My dear Sir,—Sorry not to be able to see you, but am called away to a critical case. Mr. Trent was altogether unaware of your presence at Dale End. It was with evident pleasure that he heard of your proximity. He will give orders that you shall be admitted to see him when next you call at Brooklands. More puzzled than ever! Yours very truly, "Reuben Terrill."

"So, then, it was nothing less than a barefaced lie that Mrs. Fanshaw told me when she declared that my uncle had refused to receive me!" I exclaimed, as I re-folded the doctor's note. "Brooklands shall see me again in the course of this afternoon."

But not more than half-an-hour later a brief note from the widow herself reached me, which necessitated a change in my arrangements.

"Dear Mr. Protheroe," she wrote, "I am happy to be able to inform you that your uncle has now changed his mind as to seeing you. If you will come up to Brooklands about noon on Saturday, not earlier, he will be prepared to grant you an interview. Yours sincerely, "Laura Fanshaw."

"Very much 'yours sincerely!'" I muttered to myself. "But why should I be asked to put off my visit till Saturday? Can this be another of the charming widow's dodges to keep my uncle and me apart?"

II.

It was now Thursday at noon, my visit to Brooklands was not to take place till forty-eight hours later, and the question was, how best to get through the intervening time. Fortunately, Dale End happens to be situated in the midst of some most picturesque scenery, with

charming walks and drives in every direction. Having ordered luncheon, I sat down in the coffee-room to study the local guide-book. Here I was presently joined by a stranger, a tall, thin, middle-aged man, with iron-grey hair and a short, pointed beard. Both our cutlets happening to be brought in at the same moment, we sat down to table together, where a few words about the weather served to break the ice between us.

The stranger, whom I afterwards found entered in the hotel register as a "Mr. Tennant," of London, proved to be an agreeable, well informed man, and I inwardly thanked my stars for thus relieving the tedium of my solitude. After a little while our talk veered round to Dale End and what there was best worth seeing in its vicinity, the first place in that connection being claimed by Mr. Tennant for certain natural caverns, famous both for their extent and the peculiarities of their geological formation.

"I explored one of the caverns—the one known as the 'White Lady'—some four or five years ago," said Mr. Tennant, "and I was so pleased with what I saw on that occasion that I must confess to having a strong desire to visit it again. What say you? If you have nothing better to do this afternoon, shall we walk as far?"

It was a proposition to which I at once acceded. It was a little past three o'clock when we set out, the afternoon being bright and warm. Leaving the town behind us, we presently struck into a footway that wound upward through a plantation of young larches. Still trending upward and following the footpath, a walk of half-an-hour brought us to the entrance to the cavern, a rudely-built door covering a small opening in the face of the hill. Seated on a bench close by was the man who was to act as our guide.

We now proceeded to don the overcoats which, by Mr. Tennant's advice, we had brought with us, the temperature of the cavern being some twenty or more degrees below that of the sun-warmed atmosphere outside. By his further recommendation, I had brought a small flask filled with brandy. For the headgear of every-day life we substituted two close-fitting travelling caps. Mitchell, for so I found the guide to be named, now unlocked the door, and as soon as we were inside, shut it behind us. He next proceeded to light three halves of candles, each of them being stuck on a wooden spatula about two feet in length, of which each of us took one.

We were now ready to start. Mitchell led the way, Mr. Tennant following, and I bringing up the rear, through a narrow, winding passage about six feet in height, and just wide enough to allow of our walking in single file without rubbing against the sides. The walls in many places were wet and slimy; now and again a single heavy drop fell sullenly from the roof; here and there little runnels of water crossed our path, born in the darkness and void of the great hill, but destined ere long to find their way into the sunshine, each of them one of a thousand other tiny, flower-bordered streamlets

going to swell the river Ore in the valley below, which brawled and fumed over its rocky bed as though there were nothing in the universe of equal importance with itself.

After what seemed to me an unconscionable time, but which, in reality, could not have been more than three or four minutes, we emerged into an open space which was dignified with the fanciful title of the "Hall of Gems." Here our guide set fire to a flare, which illumined the cavern with a brilliant white light, and then one comprehended the significance of its appellation. A hundred thousand shining facets—as it might have been of diamond, and sapphire, and beryl—set in the walls and roof, caught and flung back the light and caught it again, flashing and scintillating, with all the hues of the rainbow, and inevitably bringing to mind those fabled caverns of gems about which one used to read in the "Arabian Nights." Then suddenly the light went out, all that was left being three yellow tips of candle flame, just enough to cause the profundity of darkness around us to seem still more profound.

On through more narrow passages, twisting and turning in the most perplexing way imaginable, till in a little while we came to another large opening.

This cavern differed from the first one, inasmuch as from the roof depended an infinite number of stalactites in various stages of growth, while from the floor rose their corresponding stalagmites, some of them probably being centuries old, with centuries of slow, patient growth still before them—drop by drop, minute after minute—before even the most ancient of them would be high enough to touch the chill fingers which seemed to be reaching down to greet them from above. The largest of the stalagmites was know as the "White Lady," from a fancied resemblance which it bore to a female form, standing with bowed head, as if in an attitude of prayer or entreaty, and having a white veil thrown over it, which, while shrouding its features, left revealed the graceful and harmonious outlines of its figure.

Onward again, through more tortuous passages, with other passages here and there branching sharply off to right and left, till we reached a point where the roof came down so low that we had to wriggle through the opening between it and the floor after a fashion which, under other circumstances, would not have been without a touch of the ludicrous. Thankful was I when we could once more stand upright. Two or three minutes later we emerged into the third, and perhaps most remarkable, cavern of the series, known as the "Hall of the Fathomless Well."

"I will light up presently, so that you will be able to see what it's like," said our guide, who had so far proved himself one of the most taciturn of mortals; "but first follow me, please."

He led the way to a point on one side of the cavern, where a hand-rail barred our further advance. Here, at his request, we held our

lights above our heads, and strained our eyes into the black abyss which fronted us. Then, after a little space of silence, which was almost painful in its intensity, Mitchell took up a stone from a heap placed there for the purpose, and dropped it over the edge of the abyss. We held our breaths, and listened. After a space of time long enough, as it seemed, for many heart beats, we heard a faint, sullen splash, which sounded as if it came to us from an immeasurable distance.

"It's said to be more than two hundred and fifty feet down to the water," remarked our guide sententiously; "but how deep the water itself is, nobody has yet found out, and most likely nobody ever will." Then he added: "If you gentlemen will now blow out your candles for a few minutes, I will just step round to a point nearly opposite where we are now, and light up the cavern so that you will be able to see every nook and cranny of it."

With that he went, taking his light with him, and a moment later he and it were lost to view behind a huge fragment of rock which cumbered the floor, and seemed as if it might one day have fallen bodily from the roof. As Mr. Tennant and I turned to blow out our candles, our eyes met. It startled me to see how white and haggard his face looked by that dim, yellow light. It seemed more like the face of a corpse than that of a living man. But scarcely had the thought time to formulate itself before we were in darkness.

Holding my rude candlestick in one hand, I turned and resting my arms on the rail waited for what was to follow. Everywhere was darkness and silence the most profound. My companion, standing within a few feet of me, might have been a thousand miles away for any consciousness I had of his presence. The waiting began to grow tedious; still there were no signs of Mitchell.

"What can the fellow be about?" at length I asked, somewhat petulantly, but my companion deigned no reply. Next instant what seemed like the sound of stealthy footsteps behind me caused me to turn and look. Could Mitchell be coming back? But the tongue of flame which ought to have been his herald was nowhere visible. Speaking again, I said: "I don't know how you feel, Mr. Tennant, but to me this thing is becoming intolerable."

Still there came no response. I was growing vaguely uneasy; it was a state of things no longer to be borne without protest. In one of my pockets was a box of wax matches. I struck one, and by its light looked for Mr. Tennant where I had last seen him.

He was no longer there! What could be his reason for leaving me thus without a word of explanation or apology? With a hand that trembled a little in my own despite, I struck a second match, and with it lighted my candle. Moving away a pace or two from the hand-rail, and holding the candle on high, I peered round in every direction, but only to find that I was alone. A hand of ice seemed to contract my heart, a sudden frenzy of terror took hold of me.

"Mr. Tennant, where are you?" I called aloud with all the strength of my lungs; and then, "Mitchell, Mitchell, come back at once!"

But the only response was a mocking echo, which seemed as though it were caught and flung from side to side of the cavern's black walls before it died away in a murmur of inarticulate sound. Again and yet again my voice resounded through the darkness, but with no other result than before. Then the conviction forced itself overwhelmingly upon me that I was abandoned.

Abandoned! Left alone, and of set purpose, in that horrible cavern with its labyrinthine network of passages from which, unaided, there seemed no possibility of escape! It seemed incredible. A cold sweat bedewed me from head to foot; in my ears there was a noise as of the rushing of many waters; my heart seemed to beat with the force of a sledge-hammer. I sank down on a fragment of rock, rendered powerless by despair and overcome as I had never been overcome before.

But only for a little while. Starting to my feet, I again sent my voice ringing through the cavern, and again the echoes took up my cry, but human answer there was none. With a groan I pressed my fingers to my eyes, and I am not ashamed to say that when I withdrew them they were wet with tears. Abandoned! But why? For what purpose? So far as I knew, I had never set eyes on Mr. Tennant till a couple of hours ago, and the guide I had certainly never seen before.

What, then, could their object have been in inveigling me into the White Lady's Cave, and there leaving me to my fate? What had they to gain by such a proceeding? When I tried to answer these questions, I felt myself like a blind man groping against a wall and vainly trying to find the opening which he feels sure is somewhere close by.

I was still groping vaguely to and fro, when across my mental retina there came a flash that almost blinded me. Could it be possible that Mrs. Fanshaw had had a hand in bringing about my present predicament? Did I owe it to her, and to her alone, that I was there; and had Tennant and Mitchell merely been the instruments for carrying out her purpose, whatever it might be? Something, I knew not what, seemed to whisper to me that in these questions I had found the key to the enigma. And yet—and yet such a possibility seemed almost too hideous for belief!

A slight sputter of my candle sufficed to recall my wandering thoughts, and then a terribly significant fact, of which I had taken no note before, claimed my instant attention. My candle would only last an hour longer at the most, and after it should have burnt itself out I should be in an infinitely worse position than I was now. As this certainty burst upon me, it struck me with such a sense of dismay and horror that consciousness itself seemed to reel under the shock, and of what immediately followed I remember nothing.

The next thing I recollect is of wriggling my way back through the low-browed entrance, of which mention has been already made. I gave a great gasp of relief when I found myself safely through. I felt that had my candle gone out while I was still on the other side, I could not have answered for my reason. After a halt of a few seconds, while I gathered breath, I pressed onward. About a quarter of an hour later, but not till after I had taken more than one false turning, I found myself in the hall of the White Lady. Hope glowed again in my heart. But I was still a prisoner and much remained to be accomplished, while by this time my candle had burnt itself down to the last half inch.

Now came the most puzzling part of my task. From the cavern in which I now found myself several openings branched out in different directions, all so nearly alike that I knew not which one of them to choose. After a few moments' hesitation, I plunged into one which seemed a little wider than the others and went boldly forward.

The part of the cavern where I was now was comparatively dry, and although the atmosphere was both moist and chill, still the walls did not trickle with water as they did in many other places; neither was I troubled with any unpleasant drippings from the roof. I struck a match to enable me to see the time. It was not yet quite seven o'clock—only three hours since I had set foot across the threshold of the cavern, and yet I felt as if during that short time I had gone through days of suffering and mental anguish unspeakable.

One after another the heavy hours dragged themselves along; "leaden-footed," of a truth, they might well be called. The sense of a silence so intense that I could count my heart-beats, combined with a darkness which for thousands of years had never been penetrated by a ray of daylight, became at times so overpowering, and seemed to crush me down with such a dull, intolerable weight, that it was all I could do to refrain from shrieking aloud. Although chilled to the marrow, in the course of the night I now and then sank into a state of semi-coma, always to wake from it in a little while with a start and a shiver. My matches I doled out one by one as often as I felt it compulsory on me to ascertain the time. Fortunately I found a couple of biscuits in my overcoat pocket. These I nibbled at occasionally, refreshing myself now and again with a nip of brandy from my flask; but of hunger or thirst in the ordinary sense of the words I felt nothing.

It was half-past nine on Friday morning when I heard a faint sound of voices hallooing. The sounds proceeded from a rescue party which had come in search of me. A quarter of an hour later I had left the White Lady cavern behind me for ever.

III.

I HAD been missed from the hotel, but as it had somehow become known that I was a nephew of Mr. Trent of Brooklands, no anxiety was felt at my non-appearance, it being assumed that I was staying the night at my uncle's. It was a note which reached John Vance, the real guide to the cavern, early on Friday morning, which led to the immediate formation of a rescue party. Whenever John was laid up with rheumatism, a matter of no infrequent occurrence, his scapegrace nephew, Mitchell, was deputed to act as guide in his stead. Mitchell's note to his uncle was to the effect that he had at length found the means for carrying out the cherished wish of his life, which was to join certain relatives in Canada; that when his uncle received the note he, Mitchell, would be well on his way to Liverpool; but that he had just called to mind that, owing to a little forgetfulness on his part, he had locked up a gentleman overnight in the *White Lady*, and that it might, perhaps, be as well to ascertain what had become of him.

To finish this portion of my narrative, I may just add that in a letter to his uncle, received some six months later, Mitchell confessed that Mr. Tennant had offered him twenty pounds to keep me locked up all night in the cavern, and that the temptation had proved more than he could resist.

Nothing of all this became known to me till afterwards. My one burning desire, as soon as I found myself at liberty, was to get to Brooklands as quickly as possible. That some foul scheme was afoot of which my uncle was the intended victim I no longer felt the slightest doubt. Fortunately my rescuers, not knowing in what plight they might find me, had brought a pony and trap with them, which they had left at a point about a quarter of a mile from the cavern, that being as near as a vehicle could approach. They had also brought some sandwiches and sherry, of which I there and then made a hasty meal, feeling that I might need all my strength and nerve for what was still to follow. Then we all walked down to the pony trap, the owner of which, having found out how my wishes lay, offered to drive me direct to Brooklands. Here I took leave of my other good friends, some half-dozen in all, with a promise to see them later in the day.

In accordance with my request, I was driven round to the back of Brooklands, where I alighted. Here there was a side entrance for the use of servants and tradespeople. I rang the bell gently, and in response Martha herself appeared—the very person I was longing to see.

"Oh, Mr. Edward, where have you been all this long while?" she demanded, as she drew me inside. "You ought to have come before; you ought indeed, for all *she* told you that your uncle wouldn't see you."

"I was not able to come, Martha. But now that I am here, tell me what's the matter."

"Everything's the matter. They are going to take poor master away by the eleven o'clock train."

"Take my uncle away! Where are they going to take him to?"

"That's more than I know for certain. To London, *she* says, but one can never be sure when she's speaking the truth and when she isn't. They were to have started by the eight o'clock train, but just as the brougham had come round and everything was ready, master was took with a bad fainting fit, and by the time he came to himself it was too late for the train. So now they're going by the eleven o'clock. The luggage has been sent on to the station, and the brougham will be round in a few minutes. But, oh, Mr. Edward, I feel sure that I shall never see my poor, dear master again in this world!"

"Of course this step has not been decided upon without Dr. Terrill's sanction?"

"Dr. Terrill knows nothing whatever about it. He came yesterday as usual, and his last words—I heard 'em myself—were: 'I shall expect to find a marked improvement in my patient when I see him to-morrow.' He wouldn't have said that if he had thought master was going to be spirited away before he could see him again. But don't you see, sir, that if they could have got him off by the eight o'clock train, he would have been far enough away before the time for the doctor's visit. However, his fainting fit put a stop to that, so, about an hour since, Mrs. Fanshaw sent Mr. Rupert—that's her son—into the town with a message to Dr. Terrill. Molly, the parlour-maid, was dusting in the back drawing-room, when his mother called Mr. Rupert into the front room. The folding-doors were only put to—not shut—and Molly has sharp ears. Says Mrs. Fanshaw, 'You must go at once into the town and see Dr. Terrill—he will hardly have started on his rounds by this time—and tell him that Mr. Trent, by his own express desire, left home by the eight o'clock train this morning for London, in order to obtain a further medical opinion as to his case, and that, consequently, it will be no use his calling to-day. Tell him, further, that I will drop him a line from London to let him know when we shall be back at Brooklands.' With that the young man hurried off. But why should she send word that master had started by the eight o'clock, unless it was because she didn't want the doctor to see him again?"

Martha's question was one I could not answer. Evidently there was but one thing for me to do, and that was to ascertain from my uncle's lips whether it was at his own desire that he was being removed from Brooklands. But how to manage it? If I entered the house and demanded to see my uncle in the ordinary way, I should simply be repulsed as I had been repulsed before. Whatever was to be effected must be by the aid of stratagem.

At this moment we heard the sound of wheels. It was the brougham going round to the front door to be in readiness to take my uncle to the station. There was not a minute to lose.

"Where is Mrs. Fanshaw at the present time?" I demanded of Martha.

"Where she nearly always is—in the little blue sitting-room that opens into master's dressing-room," was the reply.

"Good. In two minutes from now you will go upstairs and tell her that the coachman wishes to speak to her—or whatever else you like, so long as you get her downstairs; and for the rest, don't be surprised at anything you may see or hear."

Martha nodded.

Our interview had taken place in the enclosed yard at the back of the house. While talking with Martha, two things had struck me—first, that the lower sash of one of the bedroom windows was a few inches open, and secondly that a gardener's ladder was lying within a few yards of my feet. One did not need to be a professional burglar to see the connection between the ladder and the window. Three minutes later I found myself inside a bedroom, which, judging from appearances, I took to be that of Mr. Rupert Fanshaw. I opened the door and listened. Presently the murmur of voices reached me—evidently Martha was delivering her message. I advanced cautiously along the corridor, the carpet deadening the sound of my footsteps. The corridor opened on the main staircase, but at a different angle from that which led to my uncle's suite of rooms. A soft rustle of garments greeted my ears; my ruse had succeeded; Mrs. Fanshaw was following Martha downstairs. Now was my opportunity. Darting forward, I crossed the head of the stairs, and passing into the other corridor, entered the room just vacated by the widow, the key of which I at once turned. This room opened into a dressing-room, and that again into my uncle's bedroom.

Going quickly forward into the latter, I involuntarily came to a dead stand, so great was the shock of pity and surprise which overcame me at sight of the pallid, corpse-like figure, with its wide-staring, glassy eyes, stretched out on a chaise-longue, and evidently dressed for a journey. For a moment something seemed to choke me; the next I strode forward, and bending over him, took one of his hands and lifted it to my lips.

"Uncle, it is I—Ned. Don't you know me?" I said in a voice which sounded other than my own.

His mouth dropped a little, and he bent his glassy eyes upon me with a dull, questioning look. Then, with a suddenness that was startling, the film seemed to clear away, and in its place flashed out the light of a glad recognition. A low, inarticulate cry broke from his lips; his long, lean fingers closed over mine like a vice.

"Oh! Ned, Ned, why did you not come long ago?" he cried.

"But it is not too late. You will save me from her—you will take me away—anywhere—where she cannot find me—won't you, Ned?" There was a pitiful anguish in his voice that wrung my heart.

"Listen, uncle. She says that it is at your own desire that she is taking you away—that you want to go to London to consult some specialist. Is that so?"

"No—no—it is a lie!" he exclaimed with energy. "She wants to get me away from Terrill—but if she takes me away I shall be a dead man in a week. Ned—save me—save me!" His fingers relaxed their grasp, his head sank back on his pillow, and he began to cry like a child.

What a wreck! What a change from the stern, reserved, self-contained Jacob Trent, of whom I used to stand in such awe when a boy.

"Have no fear, uncle," I said, laying a hand reassuringly on his shoulder. "Take my word for it that Mrs. Fanshaw's reign is at an end. From this hour you shall be troubled with her no more."

But by this time Mrs. Fanshaw had returned, and was trying the door, which I had locked. "Mr. Trent—cousin—open the door, please. It is I." Evidently she was not yet aware of my presence.

Leaving my uncle where he was, I crossed through the dressing-room into the room beyond, then locked the door of the former and pocketed the key. Then I flung open the door into the corridor, and confronted Mrs. Fanshaw.

Never have I seen such a look come into the face of any human being as came into hers the moment her eyes met mine. It was a compound of astonishment, fear and hate in about equal proportions. Her powdered cheeks faded to a sort of greenish tint, far from pleasant to look upon.

"You here!" she gasped.

"Even so, Mrs. Fanshaw; and, what is more—here I mean to remain."

"We will see about that presently. Allow me to pass." I was standing full in her way, and did not offer to move.

"That door is locked, madam, and the key in my pocket."

"What is the meaning of this tomfoolery?"

"It means, madam, that I, Mr. Trent's nephew and nearest relative, distinctly refuse, both now or at any other time, to allow you to enter his room. It means that you were about to take him away—to what spot is best known to yourself—secretly and against his own wishes, and without the knowledge or sanction of Dr. Terrill. It means that, in order to facilitate your own vile ends, I was got out of the way in a manner of which you are doubtless fully cognisant, and that, had your wishes been fully carried out, I should not have been here now. You and Mr. Trent will meet no more; on that point you may rest assured. For the time being I am in charge of my uncle's establishment, and all that pertains to it. Madam, the

brougham is at the door, ready to convey you to the station. I will take care that any property you may leave behind you shall be forwarded to whatever address you may choose to specify."

"So, sir ——" she began, and then her passion seemed almost to stifle her. Before she could say another word, a cold, composed voice broke the silence. It was the voice of Dr. Terrill, who had come quietly upstairs, and had evidently heard a part at least of what I had been saying.

"If I were you, Mrs. Fanshaw," he said, "I should do as Mr. Protheroe wishes you to do. I really should. There are certain stringent reasons which render it desirable that you should leave Brooklands at the earliest possible moment. I am sure you are too sensible a person," he added, meaningly, looking her straight in the face the while, "to press me to enter into details which might possibly prove painful to both of us."

Not a word more said the widow.

It is sufficient to add that in less than an hour she and her son had both left Brooklands, never to re-enter it. From that day forward my uncle mended rapidly. Dr. Terrill never offered any explanation of the ambiguous words which had proved so effectual with the widow, but allowed me to draw whatever conclusions I pleased. It was not till more than a year afterwards that my uncle confessed how he had been persuaded to alter his will in Mrs. Fanshaw's favour, and how sure he felt that she had, in some way, become cognisant of the fact.

Nothing ever came to light tending to prove the connection between the widow and Mr. Tennant, but that the latter, in acting as he did, was merely carrying out certain orders, I have never had any reasonable cause to doubt.

CONSOLATION.

Is thy heart troubled? Does some heavy care
Weigh down thy soul, and seem too much to bear?
Have cherished plans all failed, and trusted friends
Deserted thee in seeking their own ends?
Have others dearer still been snatched away
By Death, and left thee lonely here to stray?
Yet comfort take, and tranquillize thy mind,
For shadow here is proof of light behind!

H. de Burgh Daly.

AN EPISODE OF THE YEARS GONE BY.

TOLD BY AN AMERICAN.

AMONG those who left their home in the small colony by the sea-shore, and, taking the North Star for their guide, kept on their course until it was hidden from their sight by the grey cliffs of the White Hills, was a young man named Martin Grant, having with him his wife and only child, a boy five years of age.

The great intervales on the Saco that now comprise the best farms in the State were then only a tangled wilderness, and the sound of the woodman's axe had not awoke the echoes that slumbered in the hearts of the cliffs and hemmed them in with a granite wall, such as no city of old ever possessed. None, save the red man and the white hunter, had ever penetrated here, and the latter, on their return to their homes, had given so glowing an account of the richness of the soil, that it awoke a spirit of hope and enterprise in many a breast. For the land on that sea-shore was deteriorating day by day, and it became difficult and more difficult to get a living by its cultivation, no matter what the amount of toil and care bestowed upon it.

The stories told by these hunters bore fruit. A company was formed to settle in those fertile spots; plans were matured during the winter; and early in spring the emigrants started to take possession of the land of promise.

You, living in the favoured British Isles, can form little idea what such an expedition meant in the days I am telling of: its hardships, its perils, its uncertainties. Their journey through the wilderness was not accomplished without adventures, for danger beset them on every side. The forest teemed with beasts of prey, such as bears and wolves; but from these they had not so much to fear as from the fierce mountain panthers and wild cats, that were ever ready to spring upon them day and night. Concealed amid the branches of the trees, they would make their unexpected spring upon those passing beneath; and quite a battle would ensue before these creatures could be surmounted, either by being destroyed or put to flight, as the case might be.

Their passage through the wilderness consumed more time than had been expected, for they found the rivers much swollen by the melting of the ice and snows amid the mountains, so that they could not be forded. Rafts had to be constructed as the only means of crossing them, and that took up valuable time.

At last, all hindrances and impediments were surmounted, and the little company arrived, without the loss of one of its number, at the spot selected for the future home and settlement. The first thing to

be done was to set about the construction of some rude cabins in which to reside until they had time and resources to build something better for their accommodation.

Martin Grant was the only one not pleased altogether with the chosen spot. He thought the land not so good as it might be, and went about exploring. Somewhat further up the valley he found it much better, and said he should move up. The rest, however, having begun their temporary cabins, would not move; but Martin did. The site he selected was some two miles higher up, where the valley was narrower, and where the mountains that hemmed them in were loftier, and for ages had been sending downward the decayed vegetable mould, that made the soil beneath as a garden for richness. Here Martin hastily built his cabin, and then went for his wife and boy, who had remained with the rest of the company, under the temporary shelter that had been run up by joint exertion for the accommodation of the women and children.

"It will be very lonely up here, Martin," remarked the wife. "Couldn't we, think you, have stayed with the others?"

"I believe I have done right, Mary. I never saw such land as this. And a settler's wife must not think of loneliness," he added with a smile.

"No, of course not," she returned, suppressing a sigh. "Before starting we both agreed to put our shoulders to the wheel, and we won't flinch."

The young pioneer commenced his attack upon the forest. He was active, industrious and energetic; and in a short time he had a large opening made, and enough seed in the earth which if it brought forth fruit as abundantly as he hoped would be sufficient to supply them with food for the coming winter combined with the aid of his rifle in the raids he expected to make upon the haunts of the game, with which the mountains abounded. Mrs. Grant attended to the home comforts with a will. All the hard work—at least, as hard as it can be for those people under the circumstances, and in the small cabins—was done by her. If she caught herself wishing for a servant and for little items of civilised life she had hitherto been accustomed to, she solaced herself with the thought that if all things went well and they became prosperous settlers, every possible comfort would be theirs in time. She and her husband were superior to many of those they had come out with, by education, rearing and manners; but they were young and healthy and hopeful, and in that lay half the battle. The day's work done, Mrs. Grant devoted herself to the child, William; teaching him to read, to be good, to be as polite in these remote settlements as out of them; training him, in short, for this world, and, so far as her power lay, for the next.

The summer came and went—and at last the maple and the ash had put off the mantle of green with which all through the hot days they had been clothed, and donned one of scarlet and gold, until

it seemed that the mountain sides were all aflame. For the six working days Martin Grant laboured incessantly; on the Sunday he rested. So far as they could, in that remote place, they observed it as God's Day of Rest. On these days the father took himself his little son, read him Bible stories, and taught him Bible truths. How dear this lad was to both father and mother, seeing that he was their only one, they alone could tell. He was a pretty, loving, gentle child, I have been told, his golden hair curling and waving about his head, his eyes blue and open as the sky.

And soon the untiring industry of Martin Grant brought its reward. From half a score to a score of acres had been cleared around the cabin; and the seed he had planted in the earth returned its fruit abundantly. When the neighbours below came up, as one or another did often come to see how he was prospering, they found that his judgment had not erred: he had selected the most fruitful spot in all the valley.

Early one fine morning, it was the last day of September, Grant took his axe and started to go down to "the settlement," as they called the spot where their friends were located. He was going to do a day's work in return for one he had received from one of the settlers, who had come up to assist him in log-rolling, a labour which he could not well do alone.

"It will take you all day, I suppose, Martin," said his wife.

"Quite that. You must not expect me back before nightfall."

Martin was turning away, his axe on his shoulder, when the little boy, to whom he had already said good-bye, sprang from his bed, in his night-gown, and ran after his father. "Don't go, father; don't go!" pleaded the child.

"But I must go, my lad," said the father, catching him up in his arms.

"Then take Willie too."

Martin kissed and soothed the lad, and gave him over to his mother, promising him to be back as early as ever he could.

"Willie run after father," said the child, in a determined voice, tears in his blue eyes.

"Better not let him out of your sight to day, Mary," cried Grant, laughingly. "Little boys must never run away."

"Willie would never do that," said Mrs. Grant, by way of impressing upon the child that he ought not to do it; and though her husband had made a feint of speaking lightly, she read a caution in his eye as he looked at her. "The woods are dense and dark, and Willie would lose his way."

She proceeded to dress the child and to give him his breakfast. He made no further allusion to the matter, or to his father's absence, but learnt his little lesson, and then began to play out-of-doors as usual, seemingly having forgotten his disappointment at not being taken to the settlement.

Mrs. Grant went about her various household matters, listening to the child's prattle; and when she did not hear it, glancing from the door to see that he was safe. Not that she thought there could be the slightest fear that the child would attempt to do as he had said, "run after his father," or stray beyond the close proximity of the cabin.

The forenoon passed. When the sun had gained its height they dined; and then Willie was placed upon the bed for his mid-day sleep. He slept a good part of the afternoon; and when he got up began to play about the floor of the cabin.

"Let Willie go to the brook to swim his boat, mother," he said by and by.

There was nothing against this. The brook was a little stream of shallow water but a short distance from the cabin, and the child often played there. Away he went, taking his little toy boat, one his father had cut for him out of a piece of wood, his straw hat shading his face, and his golden curls flying.

Mrs. Grant had some ironing to do. When it was completed, she took her sewing, a woollen shirt or waistcoat she was making for her husband, and sat down at the open door. Willie, within sight, was as busy as possible, now pulling his boat along the stream by a piece of string, and now pretending or trying to stop the little stream from running. Mrs. Grant sang as her nimble fingers plied the needle; she was hoping to finish the work before her husband's return, for he wanted it to wear on the morrow; and her thoughts busy, she quite forgot all about his caution in regard to Willie.

Thus the afternoon passed. With the disappearance of the sun, the last stitch upon the garment was taken, and, folding it up, Mrs. Grant laid it carefully away. While doing this, she suddenly remembered that she had not seen Willie or heard his voice for some time. It was so unusual to look particularly after the child, for he never strayed beyond call, that her vigilance had unconsciously slept.

Running out-of-doors, she looked towards the brook, following up and down its banks with her eyes, but the boy was nowhere to be seen. She called him by name, but no answer came back to her anxious ear save the echo her voice awakened among the cliffs. Again and again she called, with a like result, and then, filled with alarm, she hurried to the spot where she had last seen him; namely, on the edge of the brook.

All the mother's heart rising and palpitating, she stood and gazed about her. Here were the prints of his little shoes upon the white sand, and here the work of his hands, where the little dam crossed the stream, where he had laboured so busily that afternoon; but further than this there was no trace of him to be seen, and although his name was called until the grey cliffs resounded with a dozen voices, the sound of his voice came not to her listening ear.

Perhaps it may be wondered at that until this moment she had not

remembered the caution of her husband to keep Willie in sight. Suddenly it rose up before her, and her heart smote her for this neglect of duty. What if the child had, indeed, attempted to follow the way his father had gone, and had lost himself in the dense woods. The thought was terrible, for was not the forest the home of wild beasts, by which he might be devoured? And even if he escaped them, was not darkness fast coming on, which would hide him from their anxious search? Why, oh, why had she not kept him by her side?

She ran back to the cabin, looking round and about it; but a moment's glance assured her that he was not there; and she went hastily across the clearing to the bank of a large stream that came rushing down from one of the black gorges among the mountains. It was at this point that her husband had crossed to go down to the settlement, and eagerly she scanned the sand that strewed the margin of the water. There were her husband's footsteps plainly discernible at a point where he had sprung from rock to rock across the stream; and, bending down, her heart beating wildly, she soon saw, in the fast fading light, the tiny footprints of a child mingled with them. Had the child, after making his way so far, seen these footsteps of his father and so striven to follow them? Undoubtedly there were the little fellow's traces; and again the poor mother called loudly his name, receiving for answer only the hoarse murmurs of the brook and the wild echoes from the cliffs.

A close scrutiny of the margin of the water revealed to the anxious mother that the child had not attempted to cross it here, for his footprints could be dimly seen following the stream up as far as the sand extended, which was, perhaps, half-a-dozen rods. Here the banks were covered with small stones and leaves, and on these no trace had been left; but the mother doubted not but that he wandered onwards, and was even now going further and further from her arms. With a shudder she remembered that the gorge, down through which the stream rushed, had a bad name for the wild beasts ever to be found there. Even now her darling might be in their power! Another patch of white sand lay before her, and eagerly Mary Grant scanned its surface. The daylight was fast dying out; the shadows of night were creeping out from the gorge. A little longer and the darkness would be so dense that the way would be difficult, and the slight trail impossible to keep. But there it was yet, and she hurried onward, calling ever and anon his name, which the dark cliffs hurled back to her as if in mockery.

Darker and darker grew the way, and narrower became the valley she was traversing. The high cliffs on either side here came up nearer to the banks of the stream, and soon the last lingering trace of daylight was gone. But high on the western summits of the mountains the light of the moon lay cold and white, as it sailed swiftly up in the clear sky; before long, it would be right overhead,

shining into the gorge to light her anxious feet. There was no trail to follow now, but still she hurried on, ever calling his name that she might not pass him in the gloom: "William! William!" That the child was still further up, going on incessantly in search of his father, she entertained no doubt.

The further she advanced, the rougher became the way; and at last she found, peering out as she best could in the uncertain gloom, that the cliffs before her came close up to the stream; so close that the water washed their base.

Willie, then, could go in this direction no further unless he crossed the stream, which was deep now; and if he had attempted that, might not she have passed his body lying beneath the dark water that had robbed him of his life? The thought sent a worse chill to her heart; and once more she called his name; but the roar of the water over the rocks drowned her voice, and she hurried onward fearful of she knew not what.

Suddenly she paused as if turned to stone, motionless stood she as the granite about her. A sight met her gaze that seemed to freeze the very blood in her veins.

On the summit of the cliff before her, on which the moonlight, bright and clear, had just begun to fall, lay crouched a huge panther, its tail moving cat-like to and fro, as if preparing to spring upon some victim beneath. At the first glance, Mrs. Grant had thought that she was the object of the monster's attention, but another moment showed her the form of her child standing close up to the cliff in the deep shade, through which as yet the moonlight had not penetrated: and, above the roar of the water, she distinguished his voice calling for his father.

"Father, father, come to Willie! Where are you, father?"

For a few seconds Mary Grant stood as one frozen to the earth, paralysed by the terrible danger that menaced both herself and the child. Then, with a faint cry, she sprang forward, and sinking to the ground clasped the little one in her arms, bidding him not to stir for his life. She had heard, and believed, that a panther would not attack its prey so long as it feigned death, or remained perfectly motionless—and this was her only hope of escape. To attempt to flee, especially with Willie in her arms, she knew would be a signal for the monster to spring down upon them.

The panther, just ready to spring upon the child, had been disconcerted by the sudden appearance of another object, and for a few moments lashed its tail in anger; but at last it settled down into a new position, ready for a leap the moment there should be a sign of life below. That signal was not long wanted, for Willie, despite the tight hold and caution of his mother, moved a little, and the panther prepared for the leap. But help, that the unhappy mother had been silently imploring God for, was at hand.

Scarcely a moment had passed, when the animal sprang high in the

air where it crouched, moved to the spring by deadly injury, and came crashing down almost close upon them, a bullet through its brain. The sharp report of a rifle, startling the echoes of the gorge, betrayed the shot which had been their salvation. Martin Grant came up to the succour of his wife, who for the first time in her life had fainted.

Reaching home, he had found the cabin empty. Fearing what had really happened, that the child had strayed away and its mother after him, he went out on the search, instinct guiding him in the right direction. No, not instinct; God's watchful care. Kneeling down there and then beside his rescued wife and child, beside the dead body of the dreadful enemy, he gave thanks to Heaven.

"And it is quite *true?*" we asked breathlessly of the American who had been relating this.

"Strictly true in every particular."

"What a lucky shot it was! And Martin Grant and his wife—did they continue to prosper in that new settlement?"

"Beyond their most sanguine expectations. They are in years now, very wealthy, very happy, and their children are prosperous in the world. Yes, I said *children:* two more were born later, a little brother and sister for Willie."

"I suppose you must have known them well?"

"Tolerably well. Considering that that naughty young wanderer was myself—Willie Grant."

A. L. R.

THE BLUSH.

When I wooed my sovereign lady,
She was all a girl should be,
Sprightly, tender, fair and courteous,
Only haughty just to me.

Bowed I late and bowed I early,
Ever duteous at her shrine,
But no glance of soft relenting,
But no gracious word was mine.

On a day when spring went laughing
O'er the meadows, dropping flowers,
Followed I, as roamed my lady
Where bird-music filled the bowers.

Down she sat and fell a musing,
With her head on her white hand;
And behind a spreading alder
Stealthily I took my stand.

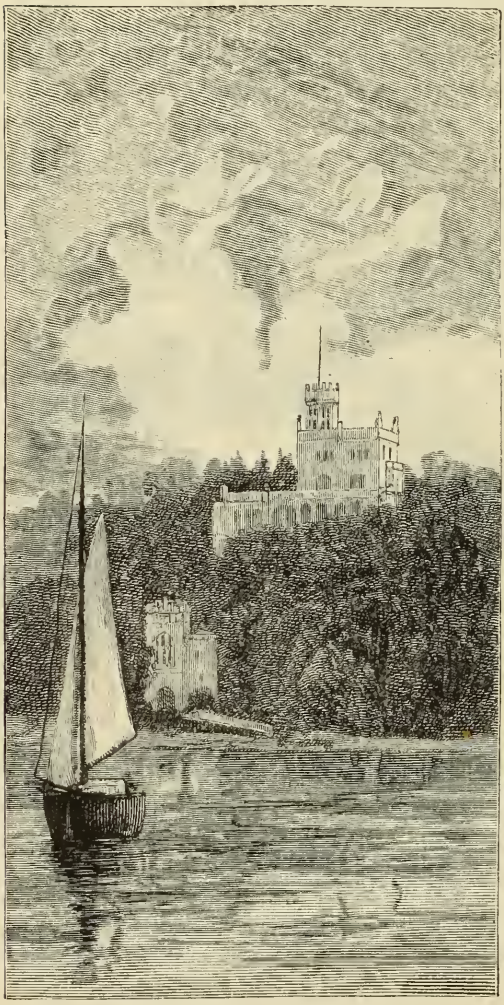
Tripped a band of maidens past her,
Mockingly cried out my name,
And a blush as bright as morning,
Flashed into her face like flame.

Then I knew the golden secret;
How her love was veiled by pride;
Like an arrow sped towards her—
Wooed once more and won my bride

Alice King.

A NIGHT EXCURSION.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Letters from Majorca," etc. etc.



Oscar's Halle.

I HAD been spending ten days in Heligoland with Carl S. and we had both fallen madly in love with the little island. It was so primitive that it almost took us back to the days of Adam and Eve; or rather what we imagine the days of Adam and Eve might have been. The winds of heaven had played upon our brows, which though not fevered, were very much exhilarated by them. We often felt as if we had taken several bottles of champagne, so intoxicating was the air; I fear we often behaved in like manner. But why not? These delicious moments and experiences, like angels' visits, are few and far between. They are les beaux jours de la vie; and life is short and passes quickly; and we may easily count the occasions of our beaux jours. There are times when even in this world we are in paradise; when we look abroad and behold everything is good; the world is young, the trees are green, and the skies are blue and laughing and full of sunshine. It all passes; the skies grow grey; we are left with only a recollection and a remembrance; but we hug it close and we live upon it in darker days; and there is always a certain sunshine in the heart.

The winds of Heligoland had exhilarated, intoxicated us. The red of the rocks, the green of the grass, the white of the sand upon the shore had proved the proverb, and surrounded us with an effect of colouring as bright and sparkling as the air itself; almost as

intoxicating. But it is only the true lover of nature who can appreciate and experience these sensations. To all else; to those without the charmed circle, below the gangway, as it were, which leads into this fairyland; these expressions will seem exaggerated. They are, in reality, the opposite.

The waves of the North Sea had made music in our ears. As the green waters rolled up over the white sand, with long, foamy edges, we declared that nothing so lovely in ocean life had ever been seen. The bold cliffs to the west of the island reared their magnificent heads, and here the waters dashed and broke about their base, and fell back white and crested, angry and persistent, and ever returning to the fruitless charge. To them the love of woman may go down; the toilers of the sea sink to their everlasting rest and be no more seen; but the rocks of the world stand for ever, and the waves beat against them in a vain fury.

We had watched the wild birds of Heligoland and envied them their power of motion, and longed for wings as much as ever did David of old. Not that we would have used them to flee away; we could not be happier than we were here in Heligoland; but, oh, the delight of soaring! Surely we should find a voice as well as wings, and like Shelley's skylark; like all other skylarks; should, soaring, ever sing. We had listened to the wild clang and cry of the sea-birds: and it had brought back to us recollections of other days and another paradise, all gone for ever. Gone because one who had helped to make that paradise had passed out into the unseen, and so in learning the secrets and all the mysteries lying beyond the veil had become wiser than the wisest of us all.

We had often crossed to Sandy Island, where, from the mistake of our first visit, we had established a reputation with the bathing-woman our devout hearts and pure intentions by no means deserved. Each time she had shaken her head at us; and if she was not shaking bathing garments or bobbing up and down with a company of foolish and frisky "bobbing Joans," would shake her fist at us also. She was of those who do not forgive and forget: implacable, remorseless. Well, there are transgressions that cannot be forgotten, and I suppose this was one of them; as terrible as the sin of a vestal virgin letting out the sacred fire. *She* was beaten with scourges, and no doubt the bathing-woman would have liked to do as much by us. Certainly Carl S. did his best at every fresh meeting to fan the flame of her righteous anger.

Yes, we were utterly in love with Heligoland. We were both childishly enthusiastic, and Carl S., who was only twenty, was romantic as well.

"It is good to be here!" he cried one day. "Let us remain here, you and I, for ever; just our two selves. Let us set up our tent. What more can we want, so long as we are together?"

This was very pretty, and gratifying to one's feelings. Friendship

is a great delight. It helps to gild the sunshine, and paint the rainbow, and etherealise the skies. It is, as Shelley says, excellent as it is rare. Carl's scheme possessed only one drawback; it was Utopian. This would be a dream-existence, and few of us can be dreamers, and none of us ought to be so. We must all work and play our part in the world, be it great or small. And it is only workers who occasionally find their earthly paradise.

"What do you say?" asked Carl S., looking quite serious because I did not immediately accept his magnificent proposal. "What more can we want, I ask you, than this Arcadian life? It is the perfection of all that is beautiful on earth. Never before have I been so happy."

"How long would you be contented with your paradise?" I asked, striking the keynote of everything that rules this world—the love of change. "Very soon you would sigh for fresh fields and pastures new; and you would in time pine away like the Savoyard who, banished from his mountains, falls ill of the Mal-du-pays; only your malady would be want of novelty."

"Try me," replied Carl. And to say the truth, I think he is somewhat of an exception, for his letters from a distant land grow longer and more constant with time and absence.

Of course we left Heligoland in due time. I believe we both almost wished it might last for ever; very certainly would have lengthened our ten days into so many weeks had it been possible.

Our terrible voyage was only half repeated in returning. Carl was very nervous, and continually thought we were going to the bottom. He declared that my presence was his only hope, and that because I was there all would be well. His confidence was certainly not given by halves. But he will never recover the shock of that first voyage. Only the other day he sent me his photograph in the magnificent uniform of a lieutenant in the King's Hussars, one of the finest and bravest soldiers his country can boast of; but at sea he will be more or less of a coward for ever.

So the terrors of the journey were only half repeated. The sea was raging with only half a tempest, not a whole one. The unfortunate passengers who wanted to land at Cuxhaven had to be taken on to Hamburg, and thence no doubt returned to Cuxhaven by train.

We were not for Cuxhaven; and we had no intention of remaining in Hamburg after the free air of Heligoland. The good old town seemed to us worse than the proverbial black hole of Calcutta; more of a prison than the Bastille, or the Conciergerie, where the poor Girondins met their doom in the Revolution of '93; worse than the Inferno Dante has so eloquently described.

We were to have parted, Carl and I, at Hamburg, each going his separate way, "after a hand-clasp close and fast." But he would none of this. The Old Man of the Sea was never so constant to Sindbad as was Carl S. on this and all other occasions. It was

useless preaching duty, or any other forcible argument; and once having satisfied my conscience by putting the matter before him in all lights, I gave it up, and was only too glad of his companionship.

We were bound for a lovelier and more charming spot even than Heligoland; for our sunny and beloved Norway, that of all countries I think holds first place in our heart. And although Carl S. was a Swede, he knew nothing of Norway. Its waterfalls had never made music in his ears; he had never heard the wind sighing and soughing through the trees of the endless and eternal pine forests. Its fjords were to him as an unknown country; and the arctic circle and the midnight sun were mere visions to his imagination. Sweden has its virtues and its merits; but it is dreary and monotonous compared with its sister country. It has none of its romance; very little of its beauty.

So one fine night we embarked in a good ship going straight to Christiania. The weather was rather boisterous, and it said much for the strength of Carl's devotion that he was ready once more to brave the elements, and that in a much longer journey than our short excursion to Heligoland.

"I know we shall go to the bottom," he cried ruefully. "I have a presentiment that I was born to be drowned, and shall meet my fate on this occasion; but at least we shall go down together; and for the rest I do not care. We just missed being drowned going to Heligoland, and we can only die once."

It is a singular trait in human nature that at twenty there is a certain luxury in the thought of death; a certain willingness to meet it; which disappears as the years advance, until at seventy, when death cannot be far off, it would be as much as possible postponed.

So when Carl S. declared his willingness to meet death, he was to a certain extent sincere; and his agony on board a Heligoland boat did not arise so much from the fear of *dying* as of *being drowned*. The distinction may be somewhat subtle, but it is real.

We passed away from the fine port of Hamburg. It was crowded with shipping. Lights were flashing in all directions. Vessels were moving to and fro, some going up to their moorings, others outward bound, like ourselves. Voices were heard in all directions; those peculiar voices and intonations one hears only on board ship. Over all was spread the dark canopy of night, enshrouding all with a sense of mystery, a weird atmosphere, so exciting to the imagination, so bracing to the nervous system.

Our vessel was not alongside, and we had to row out to her. As we approached, her lights flashed and gleamed through her scuttles. A barge laden with cargo was still alongside, and they were taking it in as fast as donkey engines and men could work. She looked a huge monster, with spars and ropes criss-crossed like spiders' webs; a great black mass, portentous and warning. Carl shivered as he looked, and crept a little closer, and I thought he was repenting. There is a

A Norwegian Valley.

"Where Falls each to the other Calls."

difference between things seen from a far-off point of view, and seen face to face. A great portion of mankind can only realise consequences when possibility has become fact.

"There is still time to go back," I said, as our boat drew up alongside the ladder. "Don't embark, Carl, without counting the cost. It will be too late when once we are off."

"I have counted it," he replied. "Have I not said that I am ready to meet death? If I shivered, it was not with fear, but with a feeling I cannot describe. I cannot always put my thoughts and feelings into words. How do you manage to do it?"

So we repented not, but embarked, and presently we loosed from our moorings and sailed away; not to the land of the Great Mogul, but to something far better. I had no fears; and I did not cheat myself into the belief that death would be welcome, with or without Carl S. to give it romance. My idea of happiness at that moment was to see Norway; to breathe its sparkling air; to listen to its forest sounds, the music of its streams, the rush and roar of its waterfalls; its flashing sunlight, all the wealth of colouring that is to be found in this Land of the Viking, under these northern skies.

"Det Gamle Norge
Med Klippeborge
Mig huer bedst,"

I exclaimed as we left Hamburg behind us, enshrouded in the darkness of night, to be traced only by its myriad lights. There is something so exhilarating in the very thought of Norway, that I believe it is the land of perpetual youth, and contains the elixir of life.

"You are quite a Norwegian," laughed Carl, as he took up the second verse of the poem, and we so carried it on to the end. "You speak it better than I do."

I did not tell him that the ring of the poem had caught my ear, and that Endre Opheim, an enthusiastic Norwegian, when he could spare time from his beloved zither, and we were wandering about the hills and valleys of Gamle Norge, had taught me the whole of it very much as one teaches a parrot: that I had first learned the sound, then the sense of the words, inverting the order of things. It was my one accomplishment in the language.

Our good ship launched out upon the deep. We had a comfortable cabin, with an upper and a lower berth, a small table, and a long seat covered with a red velvet cushion, which did excellently for a sofa.

The night was tempestuous; the wind blew; the sea broke in great waves. It was a grand sight on which we gazed from the upper deck. The wind shrieked and whistled through the rigging of the vessel. The moon, bright and silvery, rode majestically through the heavens. Clouds hurried and chased each other across the sky. Far as the eye could reach stretched the wide waters of the North Sea. The

waves dashed against the sides of the vessel, and she trembled and shivered, but kept on her way bravely. Every now and then the water broke over the lower deck, and swirled back again into the deep. Light and shadows cast by the moon and the flying clouds lay upon all. Here there was a silvery pathway gleaming upon the crested foam, cold and pure and irresponsive as a marble goddess; there under the shadow of a cloud dwelt intense darkness. The stars were bright and flashing. It was a grand and glorious scene, to which even Carl paid tribute in spite of his nervousness.

"I have never known such a succession of rough passages as this year," said the skipper of the good ship. "And yet the summer has been brilliant on land."

Then we related our experience of our journey to Heligoland, and Carl boldly acknowledged that he had been half dead with fright.

"You need not blush to own it," replied the skipper sympathetically. "It can be a frightful crossing; and in one of those little cockleshells, any landsman might be forgiven for thinking he was going to the bottom. It is not a pleasant sensation."

Carl shivered. "Are we in any danger now?" he asked anxiously, clutching a railing to steady himself as the vessel gave a heavier lurch than usual. "Is there any fear of our going to the bottom this time?"

"Kann sein, Kann auch nicht sein, Kann doch sein," laughed the skipper. "But not if I can help it. This good old craft has weathered many a rude blast, and to-night we have only half a gale. We might almost call this a fair passage."

As if to contradict him, a wave came rolling up at the moment, broke over the vessel, and swamped the lower deck. Even we on the upper deck were half drenched with the spray. The vessel creaked and strained and trembled, and seemed to shake herself free as a dog shakes off the water after a plunge into a river. Carl trembled too, I thought, and in the moonlight seemed to turn pale. All this has nothing to do with courage. A rider after a fearful fall will often lose his nerve, but he is just as brave as before. It is a physical affection that only time will remedy.

We turned in and drew lots for the berths, and the upper fell to Carl, and the lower to me. The night was passing. I was in the midst of a lovely dream about Norway, surrounded by forests that breathed incense and birds that sang and waterfalls that murmured and ran for ever, when suddenly I was awakened by two large round eyes looking anxiously into mine, and a voice that spoke in alarm.

"The moment has come. We are going to the bottom. I know we are. It is all over."

At the first moment I was startled. The vision of Norway had to fade before I could quite realise where we were. The wind and the waves had rather increased than calmed. The waters broke about us and swirled around, and in quieter moments seemed to lap and

caress the sides. Of danger there was, of course, absolutely none; but the sounds and the lurching and the rolling were sufficiently appalling to one whose nerves had lately gone through an "experience."

"There is no danger," I said. "It is quite a splendid passage. Go back to your berth and try to sleep. To-morrow morning we shall be in calmer waters."

"I can't go back up there," he shuddered. "I am certain we are going to the bottom. I will stay here on the ground, where I feel safer, and not so lonely."

"And you will catch cold and bring back your rheumatism. And there is no Dr. Lindemann on board," I remonstrated. "No massage and no vapour baths."

It was all one. There he remained the whole night. And the next morning when daylight broke and the sun had well risen, and we really were in calmer waters, he jumped up and shook himself, and declared that he had slept magnificently.

In due time we found ourselves steaming up the beautiful Christiania Fjord, with its broken outlines; its luxuriant banks, its nestling villages, its inlets and outlets, and its small and solitary islands. Carl was enraptured. Sweden could boast nothing of all this. The vessel touched at Arendal, and remained there for a couple of hours. We landed, and Carl touched Norwegian ground for the first time.

It was a quaint and primitive place with a very quaint and picturesque harbour. There was a good deal of shipping in a quiet way, and stacks of scented pine wood lay on the quays. We climbed the heights, and revelled in the magnificent views of the Fjord and the harbour and the little town, quiet and crescent-shaped, with its red-roofed houses that looked like toys, and made one feel as if here indeed was a stage, and life to the people of Arendal was nothing but a play. It was all bathed in the light of the declining sun, which tipped the far-off pine hills with gold and flushed the waters of the harbour.

As we steamed away, presently we saw a rowing-boat hurrying after us, and the inevitable passenger who is sure to be too late was frantically gesticulating. On this occasion it was one of the crew, who having stayed on shore too long and disregarded the signals for departure, had been left behind. The skipper would not wait, and the unlucky sailor had to go back again. "He will come on by to-morrow's boat," said the captain grimly; "and it will teach him to be exact another time. I would not stop for a passenger, much less one of my own crew. Once I am off it is for good; stoppages and returnings are unlucky."

"We say the same in England," I observed. "So I suppose the Norwegians are also superstitious?"

"Superstition is common to all the world," returned the skipper. "Our very belief in an unseen power makes us so. And we shall

always be so as long as we have not the controlling of our own destinies. It is the natural outcome of the mystery and uncertainty that surround our lives."

Evidently the skipper was a philosopher. I think he read my thought.

A Wedding Party.

"You wonder to hear me saying this," he said. "It is out of the province of a prosy old skipper, you imagine. But I was not always destined to the sea; and my earlier years were spent in being trained for a higher walk in life. My intelligence was awakened, and my present occupation gives me plenty of leisure time for thought."

Christiania at last, and the dangers of the sea at an end. Carl threw up his cap and became unmanageable.

"Now for a glorious time!" he cried. "For lakes and forests and waterfalls; for carrioling, and lovely walks, and wonderful adventures!"

Christiania was as bright as ever. Passing the fish-market on our way to the Victoria, once more we admired its arrangement. The women sat as of old under green boughs in their picturesque costumes, and it might have been the first of May, and they so many queens of the hour.

There is nothing in the town itself to attract one; nothing but its bright though relaxing air, and the general air of cheerfulness that comes from the painted colours of some of the houses. The streets are regular enough, ugly and monotonous. The signs of wealth that meet one at every turn in the more flourishing capitals of Europe are not found here. It is a certain relief, this simplicity, this primitive life.

Everything was new to Carl S., and everything enchanting. He was in that happy humour which finds luxury in a dinner of herbs. Perfection reigned: and as far as scenery goes, the surroundings of Christiania approach very near to it. Sunshine gilded all our days and hours; blue skies smiled upon us; the air was so light that we seemed to tread upon ether.

"Oh, if I had not come with you," he cried in an agony of thought at what might have been, "I should have lost all this! The happiest hours of my life; the happiest I can ever have! And you talked to me of duty, and I might have listened! My duty is to be here; my happiness that it might go on so for ever!"

But it is not of Christiania that I would discourse. We remained only a very short time in the capital, and then one morning took train for Kongsberg. Carl's present ambition was to see the Rjukenfoss; and I, having seen it once, was only the more eager and willing to see it again. The longing to return to these lovely spots of earth is far greater than the desire to see them which first takes us there. Every fresh visit to Norway makes one only more in love with the country. As we become more familiar with any place, it becomes in a sense our own; it is part of our mental gallery of pictures; it recurs to our waking thoughts, often haunts our dreams.

We took train to Kongsberg; skirted the lovely Christiania Fjord, the charming suburbs of the town. We gazed upon the distant hills of Thelemarken, and slowly rolled through the fertile valleys. Carl was charmed with all he saw, as well he might be. We passed over the waters of Drammen, where vessels were loading with timber for foreign parts. We slowly rolled over the long bridges, and into the station; and having changed trains, we slowly rolled out again towards Kongsberg.

We reached Kongsberg as the sun was lowering. Our amiable host of the Hotel Victoria (there are so many Hotels Victoria in

Norway) knew us again in a moment and welcomed us as if his fortune depended upon our coming.

We left him to look after our modest possessions, and knowing the way well, walked up to the hospitable inn. We crossed the bridge and looked once more upon the rushing, roaring waters : upon the rafts and loose timber that floated about. They always give one a delightful feeling of being in some far-off colony where the world is young and untrodden, and the ages have not begun to roll, or people to tread upon each other's heels. There on the right were all the smelting-houses belonging to the silver mines ; where at night the fires glow and glare, and the smoke goes forth in volumes, and crosses the pure skies in long lines. We ascended the hill and passed the ugly old church, and the gardens laden with apple trees that threw long and tempting branches, fruit-laden, over walls and hedges. A temptation not to be resisted ; for Carl, who is nothing if not impulsive, plucked and ate, and declared the Kongsberg apples better than nectar, the food of the gods on Olympus. These impulsive natures are charming ; there is no doubt of it ; and Carl S. was an ideal companion ; but how dangerous are they to themselves ; what an amount of strong principle they need to carry them safely through the world. But we must all buy our experience ; eat our share of bitter fruit, drink our cup of the waters of Meribah. And it is often our very weaknesses that in the end help to make us strong.

Everything in Kongsberg was exactly as I had left it. The same sleepy old dog met us in the courtyard, and the very same faces of the domestics. There were the same outside staircases conducting to the upper rooms, as if the architect had forgotten this very necessary matter in designing his plans. It is a quaint, old-fashioned hostelry, forming three sides of a quadrangle, and each side is as different from the other as possible. The irregular effect is rather charming.

The fourth side is a dead wall, enclosing a garden full of fruit and flowers and vegetables, as old-fashioned and charming as the house. Everything about the place is irregular, excepting the manners and dealings of its people. These leave nothing to be desired. A famous place for playing hide-and-seek, this inn ; so full of strange nooks and corners, and—apparently—of sliding panels and secret trap-doors, that, like the heroine of the "Mistletoe Bough," it is quite within the range of possibility that you might never be found again.

When the landlord had followed us up from the station, we explained our intentions to him. We had come to Kongsberg for the sake of paying another visit to the wild and lovely Rjukenfos.

"Then, sirs," he replied, "if you would see it without spending a night at Tinoset, you would have to leave here to-night at two in the morning. Even one o'clock would be safer. You will have to ride through the night, nor loiter on your way."

This was a shock to one's nerves. To get up at one in the

morning is worse than not going to bed at all. The nights, too, are often cold in Norway: they are frequently dark as Erebus. If there is a bright moon, well and good; but the moon is not always at the full, and a full moon is sometimes obscured by clouds. "More by token," it was cloudy this evening, though they had come up suddenly, and in like manner probably would disappear.

We were not equipped for a cold night drive. We had no rugs with us; nothing to keep out the chilly mists of morning, which are more penetrating than frost itself. But I had a lively recollection of the inn at Tinoset; its disorder and disorganisation; its crowd of people and its babel of tongues. I remembered, too, the maiden all forlorn who had taken compassion upon us at our last visit, when E. O. had been my companion: how she had placed supreme confidence in us, and lent us her best Sunday shawl to shield us from the cold in crossing the lake. She had brought it forth from its half-dozen wrappings, the innermost being delicate tissue paper. And if we could have pensioned off that maiden, or given her a throne, or married her to the object of her affections, we would have done it. Her heart was of gold, and she was of those units who redeem ninety and nine who go through the world absorbed in their own desires.

Nevertheless, to spend a night at Tinoset was out of the question. Ten midnight rides or drives sooner than that. But there was no maiden at hand to lend us another shawl. We confided our difficulty to our host.

"It will certainly be cold," he replied. (We were consulting in the open courtyard; the sun had gone down; and it was chilly even then.) "My wife will be able to find you grey blankets in the town, which look very much like plaids; and they cost next to nothing. I should advise you to go. I will give you excellent horses and a trusty skydsgut; you will not have to change at all; and horses, carrioles and skydsgut will remain at Tinoset, awaiting your return from the Rjukenfos the day after to-morrow."

So it was settled. The clouds had cleared again, and in the setting sun we wandered down to the river, and watched the water rushing and roaring and foaming over its bed, with the noise of a hundred cataracts. The windows of the smelting houses were dyed blood red by the declining sun and rivalled the flames of the roaring furnaces within. We made our way through piles of timber, jumped on to the rafts, and piloted ourselves about the water like modern Robinson Crusoes. It was a delicious sensation. We felt as wild and free as bushrangers. We only needed wings to make ourselves as independent as the birds of the air. The perfume of the scented pine wood charmed our senses; and through all there was the rush and roar of the falls on the other side of the bridge. These moments are worth living for; they are holy and wholesome; they haunt our waking hours for ever.

We lingered until the sun had gone down and the momentary twilight had given place to darkness, and then we went back to the hotel. The courtyard looked more quaint and curious than ever in the dark shadows of the night, relieved by the lights that flashed from the windows and cast their rays here and there across the rough pavement.

"I should recommend you to turn in early and get some rest," said the landlord, who evidently took quite a fatherly interest in us. "You will be called at one o'clock, and there will be no time to turn round for another sleep. Coffee shall be ready for you, and if you make a substantial breakfast, no harm will come to you."

IN HARDANGER.

He had been as good as his word. His spouse had gone forth and purchased us some excellent plaids, to which we probably owed our freedom from rheumatic fever, or lumbago, or neuralgia in the fifth nerve—whatever that may mean, whatever it may be. For it is no light matter to turn out of a warm bed and, lightly clad, commence a journey by carriole in the middle of a Norwegian night.

One o'clock in the morning, and we were aroused by sounds that seemed almost worse than the crack of doom. "Is it fire?" called out Carl, in muffled, far-off tones. And: "It is one o'clock," replied the landlord's voice. He had himself got up to see to our welfare.

I hurried to the windows. It was very dark, but the stars were shining. So far all was well. But it felt decidedly cold and shivery.

Presently we found ourselves in the great dining-room. It was lighted by a solitary lamp, which left most of it in gloom, and cast weird and ghostly shadows about. Only one small table received its rays, and these revealed the welcome sight of steaming coffee and boiled eggs and cold viands. They might have been funeral baked meats, so silent and solemn was the chamber.

When we descended to the courtyard the shades of night lay deep upon the earth. It was intensely dark. The place was in silence. One or two ghostly figures stood about, awaiting our pleasure. A maid-servant flitted to and fro in noiseless garments. The ponies never moved or stirred. They knew what was before them, and rested while they might. On the one carriole was our small amount of luggage ; behind the other a sack like a small mountain, containing two days' provision for the animals, who must have been gifted with large appetites.

Everything passed so silently and quietly, we might have been starting on some secret expedition ; carrying off smuggled goods, committing murders, or breaking every law of the land. There was a pleasant shade of mystery about it all which excited one's imagination. The ostler went about with a lantern like another Diogenes, not lighting the darkness, but rather making it visible. The landlord gave us final recommendations not to waste too much time at Bolkesjö, where we must halt for rest and a second breakfast.

We were comfortably packed in our carrioles. The skydsgut, or post-boy, mounted to his seat behind, which was nothing more or less than our little portmanteau flattened to a pancake : and away we went.

I had had this skydsgut on a previous visit and remembered his virtues. He was good-tempered and obliging, and kept his horses going at a decent pace : a rare virtue amongst the Norwegian post-boys. This post-boy had long passed his youth. He was getting old and grey-headed, and he had been all his life doing this work and travelling this road. As to sitting on our luggage, that of course is the custom in travelling by carriole in Norway. It has to be strapped on to the board behind, and this is the post-boy's seat. Therefore the smaller and more inflexible the portmanteau, the better for everyone concerned.

We turned out of the courtyard in the darkness of the night. The moon had risen, but it was a good deal past the full, and only gave half her light. The night was very cold, and we should have fared badly without our plaids. A weird sensation crept over us as we began our drive. It seemed another world ; a world dead or sleeping. As we passed through the town of Kongsberg, not a light gleamed anywhere ; not a dog barked ; not a cat scudded across our path like a frightened hare. It was a ghostly silence, broken only by our own

sounds, as the wheels rolled over the ground, and the hoofs of the sharp little horses rang out upon the air.

The melancholy clock struck two as we passed near the church, and quite startled us with its clang. Had it been midnight instead of two hours later, I am quite certain we should have seen ghosts flitting about the graveyard.

We went briskly down the hill, and were soon skirting the river, leaving the rushing falls behind us. For long their roar and echo pursued us. It was quite a pleasant sound in the night silence, and we listened for it until we lost it in the distance. We had no "company," and were unable to keep up any conversation with our skydsgut. He had no English; we had no Norwegian. It is true I might have gone on repeating over and over again the poem of "Gamle Norge Med Klippeborge," but this would hardly have been conversation, and would have grown monotonous. Our skydsgut also, excellent man though he was, had probably no soul for poetry. We could not talk by signs in the darkness. When we had to turn right or left, he simply touched the right or left rein which we held, and so kept us in the right road.

My horse led the van; Carl came second. But my horse would go faster than his, and with all his urging he was often a good way behind. He could not see us, and frequently felt utterly lost. He might be following, or he might have turned into a wrong road. So every now and then an agonised voice reached me from far off regions. "C., where are you? I cannot see or hear you. My horse will not go. I am lost." The alarm in the tone was unmistakable, and it was impossible to help laughing at these very natural terrors.

"It is all very well to laugh," cried Carl, deeply wounded. "But you have the best of it. The fastest horse, and the skydsgut, and you are travelling over old ground. I have nothing but my ears to trust to, for you are invisible. You wouldn't laugh if you arrived at Tinoset without me."

"Trust to your horse," I returned. "It knows the way better than we do, and will not stray. Be sure you will not be left behind. I cannot afford to lose my companion."

We had soon left Kongsberg far in the background. The horses trotted well and never tired. Presently we found ourselves in the open country, nothing but nature around us: nature in sable garments. A long, circuitous road; a stream to the right of us; open fields; hills rising around with outlines exaggerated in the darkness. A cold, damp mist lay upon the meadows, awaiting the sun to disperse it. It was very cold. There were no signs of habitations; nothing but nature, wild and gloomy. The moon cast her light around, but it was faint and feeble. The hill-sides were clothed with pines, and the wind sighed and rustled through the branches, and the tree-tops seemed faintly tinged with silver.

We passed through a pine forest, and the air seemed full of forest sounds : cones that seemed to crack, bracken that seemed to stir, as if a squirrel or other animal was being disturbed by our passage ; branches above us that softly sighed and swayed, as if they were making confidences to each other, telling of broken love-vows and shattered hopes—for the sad sound must have meant sad confessions ; and I daresay trees have their troubles and trials and blighted lives, just as we have. And is not the end the same ; for as the tree falls so it must lie, and as we fall so we must lie.

Nothing could be more solemn and strange than this night-drive through the forest. Even the horses thought they needed company, for now they kept together, and Carl was happy and at rest.

"This is lovely and delicious," he cried. "I would not have missed this night-drive for anything. All this darkness is enthralling. These trees are so many ghosts. Gamle Norge for ever! The words will be written on my heart when I die."

He did not exaggerate the charm. Every here and there the faint moon cast shadows and silvery gleams across our path. The mist seemed to curl and wreathe itself about the trees in a thousand fantastic forms. Looking upwards, we saw stars gleaming and flashing in the dark canopy of the sky. Our path was dimly defined, or not defined at all. Only the cunning little horses could have found their way so safely and surely through it. Every now and then they pricked up their ears and seemed suddenly to start as if they saw or heard things hidden from us; but the forests were in repose; nothing disturbed their solitude ; even ghosts would not come so far out the beaten tracks of civilisation.

Presently a subtle change crept over the earth. The darkness seemed to diminish ; the moon on her westward course somewhat paled in the sky ; a faint glimmering dawned in the east ; the stars went in ; the outlines of the trees became less ghostly, more defined ; the mist wreathing about them grew whiter. Gradually, darkness fled away. It seemed like coming back to life and the world. The forest sounds appeared to increase and multiply. The air grew yet colder and more chilly. We looked at each other, Carl and I, and there was a strange reflection in our faces ; the grey of the morning ; the novelty of our position and experience ; the evidence of having been aroused at one o'clock in the morning. But we were ready to repeat the experience, over and over again.

Finally the last remains of darkness rolled away ; and though we could not see it at the moment, we knew that the sun had shot up in the east. The very mists seemed to feel his immediate influence, for they curled and wreathed about as if endowed with life ; as if they knew that their conqueror had come, and they would have to give in. The sky was flushed with crimson, and the forest trees were tinged with gold, and light and shadows once more fell athwart our path. Then presently his rays reached us, and we felt warmed and

On the Sognefjord

comforted as they brought with them the inevitable sense of happiness and exhilaration.

The forest responded to it. The mists disappeared. The fir cones seemed to crack with joy, the branches to expand to the sun's caresses. It was a new day and a glad world. There was that colouring upon nature, that charm and freshness in the air, found only in these hours of sunrise. Everything seems young, glorious and glowing. Over all there is a singular sense of stillness and repose, as if nature were taking breathing time before the active hours of the day. The sense is as palpable as it is fleeting. It comes not again, even at sunset. At that hour nature is quite different, as all well know who have watched her closely and felt her subtle influences. We are changed also. In the morning we were buckling on our armour, strong for the race; now we are laying it aside.

Certainly, rising at one in the morning, and driving hour after hour through the pine forests of Norway, in no sense diminishes one's ardour for the coming work or pleasure of the day. As the sun shot up, and the moon in the pale west grew faint and ghostly, health and vigour and animation seemed to steal over us. The very horses shook their manes and neighed and trotted more briskly. The perfume of the pines began to be shed abroad, just as the warmth brings out the scent of the violets. We reached Bolkesjö, our first halting-place, before our time, and found the station only half-awakened.

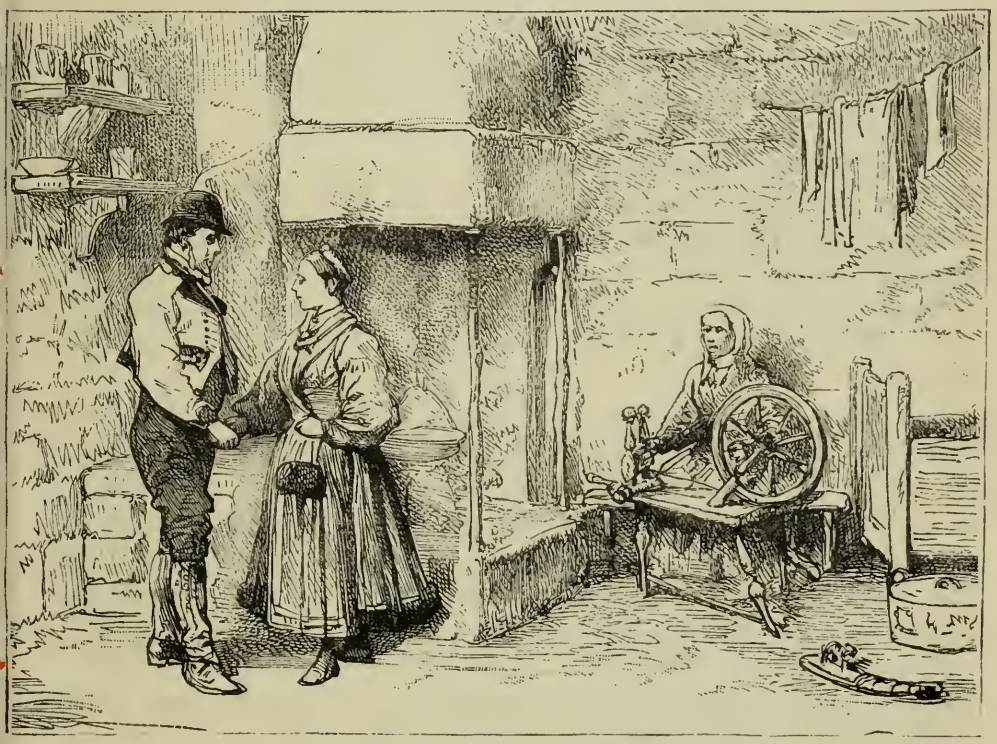
We were quite ready for a second breakfast. The day had not begun, and yet we felt as if we had already done more than an ordinary day's work. One feels very virtuous on these occasions, very industrious; a mild reproof upon those who waste their hours in sleep.

The house door was open. A sleepy woman was coming downstairs, looking cross and surprised at our unexpected appearance. We were nearly an hour earlier than was the wont of travellers. She was herself by no means in a presentable condition, and she fled back to unseen regions to complete her toilette.

Instinct guided us to the kitchen. The floor was strewed with fir branches, which scented the air pleasantly. A fire was blazing and crackling in the chimney. Here another maiden was busily engaged brewing coffee. The delicious aroma rivalled, overpowered the scent of the pine branches. She had no false modesty about her, this maiden, but quietly wished us good day. Her hair looked as if she had lately seen a ghost. Her gown hung over the back of a chair, and when we entered she calmly proceeded to put it on, and then threw a small grey shawl over her shoulders. Her cheeks did not blush, though ours did. The coffee was for her own delectation and that of sundry helpmates; but she was as obliging as she was collected, and was ready to supply us with an unlimited quantity of

coffee, bread and butter, and boiled eggs. To these we did such justice that before we had finished breakfast she had lost a little of her calmness. The depths of emotion had been stirred within her.

The view from the windows of this kitchen was wonderful and glorious. It is one of the great views of Norway, or of any land. Far down was a sleeping valley. Two lakes, one below the other, lay stretched before us. On these the sun was now glowing and flashing. Hills rose on all sides clothed with their eternal pine forests. In one part alone there was a break in the chain which appeared to



An Interior in Thelemarken.

lead out into the world. The pale sky beyond the break might have been mistaken for a sleeping ocean, it was so dreamy and undefined. Here upon the height we seemed to tower above the world, and to command it.

After a sufficiently long rest we bade the people of the inn farewell and once more set out on our way. They had now roused up to animation and the proprieties of life, and came out in a body to see us depart. It was still early, but the morning was now in perfection. The mists had cleared, and there was at once a warmth and a freshness in the bright, crisp atmosphere. From the height of Bolkesjö we looked around upon endless pine forests, warmed into life by the sunshine. All that is sad and gloomy had disappeared under the influence.

Soon after leaving the inn, we commenced descending into the valley. There on our left was the quaint little house I had visited on a former occasion, and in the doorway was the same old man ready to welcome us if we cared to enter and see his curiosities. It is a model little house and very picturesque; one of many that exist in Thelemarken.

It was a rapid descent, and before long we once more found ourselves driving through the far-reaching forests. The air was warm; the sunbeams gleamed and glinted about us; lights and shadows chequered our path. Strange flowers grew amidst the bracken; here and there a rustle and a stir betrayed some animal, and many a squirrel ran up the trees, and gazed impudently down at us from a safe distance, its bright black eyes boldly defying us.

Thus it went on hour after hour. The horses never tired. They were as fresh and brisk at the end of their journey as they had been at the beginning. There, at the end of the road was Tinoset, the inn staring us in the face and blocking our way. To our right the waters of the lake gleamed and flashed in the sunlight; to the left uprose the rugged hills. For it is a wild and rugged spot just here. We have left the beauty and softness and charm of the forest, all the forest life behind us, and for a moment the heights are bare and desolate.

The inn was the same as ever. Nothing was changed. The same disorder reigned; the same sort of people seemed in possession of the rooms. Our horses had made such good way that we were long before our time. The little steamer that was to take us up the lake was moored alongside. It was not the one we had had before. That had gone to the bottom, one unhappy day; and this, a larger and better boat, had taken its place.

We searched for our former friend in need. She was still there and recognised me and inquired for E. O. To-day we had our own plaids and were independent of her, but she would no doubt have been as ready as ever to come to the rescue.

It was a warm and lovely morning, too. The sky was cloudless and the sun shone vigorously upon our little world; a very lovely and perfect world; an earthly paradise. When the boat started it had a very fair freight on board, without being crowded. That unpleasant season of the year was over, to our infinite delight. There were still more than we cared for; and there were of course the usual British curiosities; people that you wonder where they were born, where they come from and go to on their return to English soil. I suppose they exist in England, yet one seldom seems to come across them.

The journey down the lake was very cool and delicious. We called at a few primitive stations and obtained a momentary insight into these remote country habits and lives and settlements. One felt in another world for the instant, where all might be as it was in the days of Adam, so quiet and simple did all appear. The hills

On the Way to the Rjukenfos.

bordering the lake surrounded us on all sides, falling away in broad undulations, pine-fringed or standing out in clear-cut outlines. There were small farms on the hill-sides and patches of cultivation; green spots in a desert land, where man toiled until the evening, and earned his bread by the sweat of his brow. Cattle strayed here and there, the hope and riches of their owners. Occasionally on the boundary of a small farm a boat was moored, almost the only means of communication with the outer world. For the hills rose precipitously out of the water, and if a path bordered the lake we could not see it.

And then we reached Strand, our destination. Here there was a general gaol-delivery. Every one was evidently bent on one and the same mission: a visit to the Rjukenfos.

How well we remembered our last visit here, only a year ago. Our arrival at night with a great crowd of curious tourists—the teachers of all the schools in Norway—a learned company, no doubt, but certainly not a courtly. The landlady had taken compassion upon us, and given us a room to ourselves; but she could not bestow what she did not possess, and, hungry as hunters, we had found nothing but famine and desolation; grilled bones, which were seized by the Philistines, so that only empty dishes reached us. We had made out with black bread and biscuit, and both had retired in a state of collapse, yet hoping many things of the morrow.

To-day it was better. A new inn a little further on had been opened, and here we lodged palatially and fared sumptuously compared with last year's experience. There were plenty of carrioles and stolkjars and small carriages that held four, waiting to convey people to the Rjukenfos, and we had soon made our choice; a young, active driver, dressed in a green shooting coat and breeches, which set off his neat, well-made form, and a hat that only needed a bunch of edelweis to turn him into a Swiss mountaineer. But the Norwegians are far nicer than the Swiss. They are honest and straightforward, less calculating and grasping. How long will they keep their integrity under the strain of the crowds that now yearly flock to Norway?

How grand and lovely was the drive—how wild and romantic. The hills towered on all sides; the ponderous Gausta reared his magnificent head, snow crowned. The river rushed noisily on our left, hurrying to the calmer waters of the lake. There were all the same signs of life to be noted that we had seen a year ago. It seemed as though the world had simply slept through the intervening time. The very same dogs came out and barked at us. There was the romantic saw-mill on the river, the men hard at work, great beams and rafters floating about. The rickety old bridge spanned the noisy rushing stream, but was the exact thing to harmonise with the scenery.

We were a travelling cavalcade, and the way was very much uphill. But our driver did not belie his looks, and we led the van. Yet it

mattered little whether we were first or last. One cared nothing for speed in such a scene; the whole attention was absorbed in contemplation and enjoyment of the sublime and beautiful. Rarely can it be found in an equal degree.

As we neared our journey's end, the valley closed in. The mountains seemed to bar our progress. The bed of the river narrowed, and the waters became more rushing and turbulent. We ascended higher and higher, until we looked down into shuddering depths: a wild ravine, with a roaring, frothing torrent, making everlasting music.

Carl was enchanted. He had never experienced anything like it. He grew as wild as the scenery, and seemed to lose his head with excitement. It was hardly to be wondered at. Whatever we possess within us of enthusiasm and exhilaration must be roused to the highest point by these scenes of nature in her wildest and grandest moods.

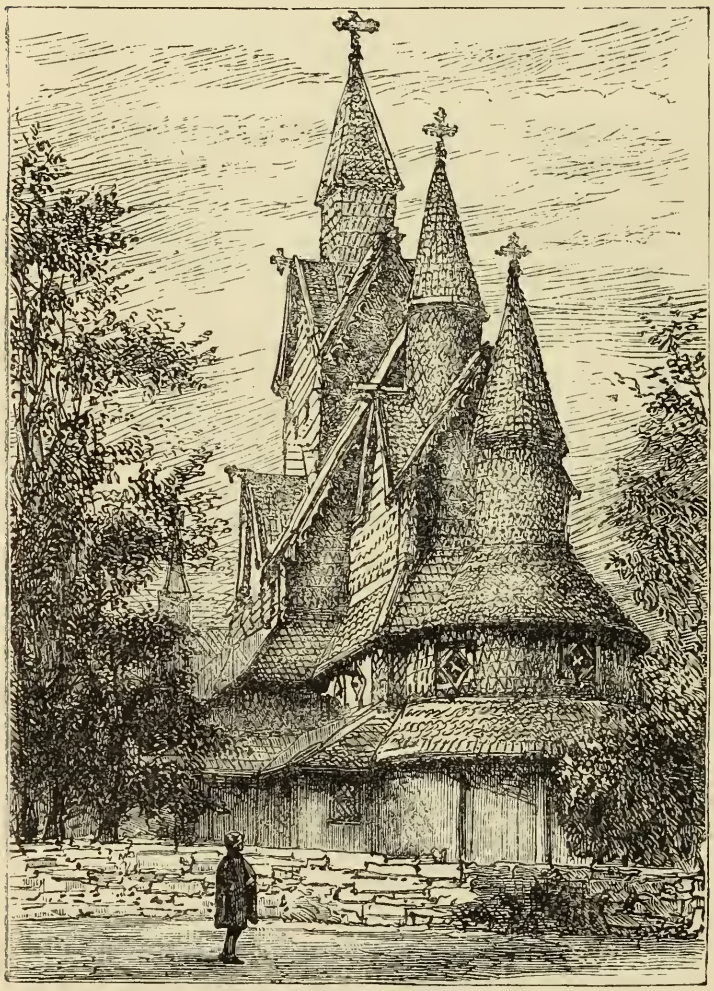
Finally we had to leave our conveyance and walk up the narrow mountain pass which leads to the fall. We reached the small inn which is so far out of the world. Then, just beyond it, we turned a corner, and the wonderful Rjukenfos burst upon our vision. The immense body of water came rushing and tumbling into the depths below. We looked into a gigantic seething cauldron, whose depths were lost in the clouds of ascending spray. We stood on the very edge of the precipice; one false step and all would have been over. Carl, in his excitement, would climb down a little, holding on by the sides. It looked horrible, and I thought him lost. I commanded him to come back in my firmest tones; he only laughed, and went a little further. It was a suicidal process, and when he returned to safety we had a desperate quarrel and agreed upon instant separation. Five minutes afterwards, however, it was all forgotten, and our social atmosphere was all the clearer for the storm.

The roar of the water was deafening. It tumbled and foamed and seethed in its inexhaustible supply. We could scarcely hear ourselves speak. Birds flew across the great chasm, and seemed lost in space. Looking over the giddy height, the strongest brain might have reeled. We lost our breath in gazing. It fascinated us like a basilisk or a snake charm. It was at once horrible and sublime to contemplate: a mixture of pleasure and pain.

It was very difficult to turn and leave it, but time would not wait, and the hours flew quickly. At length we found ourselves returning; as we had ascended the valley, so now we were descending. Once more we were on a level with the river, and when we reached our inn at Strand the shades of night were falling. After a well-earned repast, in which grilled bones and empty dishes played no part, we took a long and delicious walk on the banks of the lake. We had it all to ourselves. The stars came out and found their reflections on the calm waters. Nothing stirred; there was no sound anywhere.

It was the music of perfect silence. And it was a perfect sight, and we asked for nothing better.

Early the next morning the steamer came up to take us back to Tinoset. Sunshine accompanied us. Our skydsgut was awaiting us at the end of the lake, the horses ready harnessed to the carrioles. By this means we were the first to start, and commanded and kept the road. In a long journey it is everything to be ahead of others. We made straight for our carrioles, and had started and were well on our way before some of the passengers had left the steamer.



HITTERDAL CHURCH.

We returned by the Hitterdal route for the purpose of visiting the quaint old church, which is one of the curiosities of Norway, and which Carl had never seen. Again we passed through endless pine forests, the sunshine glinting and gleaming about us, the trees sending out their perfume, wild-flowers abounding, and squirrels peering at us with curled tails and jet-black eyes. But with the exception of the church of Hitterdal, the road by Bolkesjö is grander and more beautiful. Yet it is only degrees of comparison, where all is lovely.

Everything comes to an end, and so did our drive. We had left Kongsberg in great darkness; we returned to it in like manner. As we entered the picturesque courtyard, already lights were gleaming hospitably from the windows of the inn, and above, the stars were beginning to come out. We had had a singularly happy time, and

I scarcely know which of us had been the more enthusiastic and excited throughout the journey. The landlord was ready to receive us, made us welcome, and prepared us of his very best. The little horses went off to their stable as briskly as if they were ready to begin it all over again at two o'clock in the morning. The skydsgut was dismissed with all he had deserved, and hoped he would have the pleasure of conducting us again next year.

But next year was last year, and Norway saw us not. Our pleasures do not always repeat themselves, and so we must make the most of our opportunities. Why do our beaux jours pass so quickly, giving to life its inevitable sadness? Why will not time stand still for us at certain periods of our lives, on certain occasions? Why is there always a night to our brightest day?

But on the occasion of which I write we did not moralise. We made the most of our happiness and so enjoyed it twice over. We did not think of coming days and separation; and change of scene from paradise or the elysian fields to the prosy level of the plain. These would come in time, but we would not anticipate it.

Yet it is well to have our contrasts, our lights and shades. It is well that we have to buckle on the armour of work, that we may enjoy our intervals of leisure. It is the working bees which extract the honey from the flowers, and really revel in life; the drones must be a very miserable community, if they would only tell the truth.

That night we wandered down again to the rushing falls of Kongsberg, and once more found our way on to the floating rafters, and very nearly found our way into the water also. The sun had long set; darkness brooded over the face of the earth. The windows of the smelting houses sent forth lurid flames and reflections which suggested pandemonium; and in the dark canopy of the sky shone the calm, beautiful, far-off stars, which whispered of Heaven.

THE STORY OF A PORTRAIT.

IN the season of 1867, two rival beauties, Lady Georgina Bergheim and the Honourable Mrs. Arthur Mowbray, were conspicuous among the many claimants to supremacy in the fashionable world of London.

Each had her train of enthusiastic admirers and, as a matter of course, her no less persistent detractors; the partisans of the one jealously declining to recognise even the most indisputable qualities of the other. Lady Georgina was twenty-six years of age, a lustrous-eyed brunette of queenly aspect and Juno-like form; whereas Mrs. Mowbray, a year or two her junior, was a delicately-complexioned blonde, with soft blue eyes, a profusion of nut-brown hair, and a slight but exquisitely proportioned figure.

Both, however, were incomparably the belles of the season; and, being perfectly aware of the fact, as a natural consequence they detested each other cordially; although, as far as outward appearances went, a casual observer would assuredly have taken them for the best and most sympathetic of friends. When they met in public, nothing could be more affectionate than their greeting; both with touching accord assuming their sweetest smiles and most honeyed accents, and carefully taking stock meanwhile of every separate detail of "dear Georgie's" or "darling Annie's" toilette, to be imitated or unsparingly criticised—as the case might be—hereafter.

Of their respective husbands, with whom we have little to do, a very brief mention will suffice.

That Lady Georgina Coningsby, a younger daughter of the Duke of Loamshire, should have married Mr. Leopold Bergheim, head of the well-known firm of Bergheim and Patterson, was, as times go, a simple and natural "arrangement." She wanted money, he a titled wife; and, as both got what they desired, it is presumable that they were satisfied with their bargain. A more suitable union, however, from a social point of view was that of the Honourable Arthur Mowbray, the eldest son of Lord Sandgate, and Miss Annie Dashwood, a North-country heiress of good family, whose début in London had been a signal success, and had at once entitled her to rank among the most attractive beauties of the day.

The rivalry already existing between the two ladies in question came to a climax in 1867, in the Academy of which year a portrait of Lady Georgina by a young and rising painter named Conway was exhibited; and, being fortunately hung "on the line," was admired and talked of by everybody.

The success obtained by it, both as an excellent likeness and as an artistic masterpiece, was gall and wormwood to Mrs. Mowbray;

and the more so because, however inclined she might be to disparage the work, she was unable to assign any plausible reason for dissenting from the general opinion of its merit.

"I may checkmate her in another way," she thought, "and without compromising myself in the least. Why not meet her on her own ground, and give this Conway, who certainly has talent, an opportunity of establishing his reputation, by sitting to him myself?"

The idea of gratifying her own vanity at her "friend's" expense tickled Mrs. Mowbray amazingly, and she lost no time in making the necessary arrangements for her first visit to the painter's studio.

"He is not likely to be dissatisfied with his model," she said to her husband a day or two later, while complacently inspecting her pretty face in the glass.

"Probably not," replied the Honourable Arthur, to whom his Annie's naïve appreciation of her charms was a never-failing source of amusement. "The only question is, whether you will be as pleased with the copy as he has every reason to be with the original."

As might be expected, Conway was not a little flattered by the enviable privilege of counting among his patronesses two of the recognised beauties of society; and as Mrs. Mowbray, feeling pleasantly conscious that she had never looked better, was in a radiant humour, the sittings commenced under as favourable auspices as possible.

This happy state of things lasted until the portrait was far advanced towards completion, when the lady's enthusiasm gradually waxed fainter and fainter; and she even ventured on some critical objections which, when the artist had put the finishing stroke to his work, became more and more decisive in tone.

There was no disputing the resemblance; nor could any fault be found either with the colouring or with the minute attention to detail; but—at least in Mrs. Mowbray's opinion—there was still something wanting. It is indeed doubtful if the finest portrait painter that the world has ever produced could have come up to the standard of her own imagined perfection, or even partially realised the ideal fashioned by her inordinate self-conceit. That she was far from gratified by the result of the sittings her looks showed clearly enough; and Conway, although not a little mortified, had sufficient tact to conceal his disappointment, and even suggested that if the picture were left untouched for a few weeks, he might possibly be able by the aid of a happy inspiration to render it more worthy of so charming a model.

This was exactly what Mrs. Mowbray wanted, and she congratulated herself on her escape—at all events temporarily—from the annoyance of exhibiting (and paying for) a portrait which she persisted in regarding as an utter failure.

On her relating what had occurred to her husband, who fully

expected as much, his only comment was a significant "Ah!" a monosyllable as conclusively expressive of that gentleman's opinion as Lord Burleigh's traditional shake of the head.

Meanwhile Conway, left alone in his studio, examined his handiwork with a critical eye.

"There's no accounting for women's caprices," he said to himself, "for to my mind I never did anything better. As for touching it again, I should only spoil it, and it has cost me time and labour enough already. Perhaps some day, when her admirers begin to fall off, she may come to her senses, and be inclined to own that the portrait was not so very unlike her once, whatever it may be then. At all events, I'll keep it on the chance."

Consoling himself as best he might with the prospect of this rather problematical contingency, the painter, after a last look at his unappreciated picture, deposited it carefully in a corner of the room appropriated to unfinished sketches and other neglected paraphernalia of an artist's studio, where it remained undisturbed until, amid the rapidly increasing number of his professional engagements, he had almost, if not entirely, forgotten its existence.

Twenty years, although but a brief span in the world's history, count for a good deal in the lives of most people; and the lapse between 1867 and 1887 affected in more ways than one the different personages of our story.

Lady Georgina Bergheim had been for some time a widow, and her "salon," semi-political and extremely exclusive, had become an important feature in London society. The Honourable Arthur Mowbray had succeeded his father as Lord Sandgate, and his wife, thanks to her practical study of the resources of art and to the intelligent co-operation of a Parisian man-milliner, looked ten years younger than she really was. Having fortunately secured an eligible husband for her only daughter in the person of Sir William Anstruther, possessor of a large and—what is now seldom the case—unencumbered estate, she was free to follow her own devices; and, profiting by the aids and appliances before mentioned, still passed for a handsome and attractive woman.

Conway, meanwhile, had by this time attained a high rank in his profession, and was generally allowed to be the best and most successful portrait painter of the day. He had occasionally met Lady Sandgate in society, but, as far as he could do so without discourtesy, had purposely avoided her; and as she on her part was too unpleasantly conscious of having treated him unfairly to feel at ease in his presence, it so happened that they had hardly exchanged half-a-dozen words since her last visit to the studio.

Chance, however, unexpectedly brought about another interview between the artist and his former model.

Sir William Anstruther, who was justly proud of his pretty wife, had

expressed a wish that her portrait should figure in the approaching exhibition of the Academy; and to whom could so delicate a task be entrusted with the certainty of success but to the painter in vogue—in a word, to Conway?

The sittings, which had commenced early in the year, were drawing to a close, and Lady Anstruther was enchanted with the result.

"I must really bring mamma to see it, Mr. Conway, if you have no objection," she said. "You know her, I think?"

"I have had the pleasure of meeting Lady Sandgate," he replied, not without embarrassment, "and shall feel honoured by her approval."

"When it is quite finished, of course," she rattled on gaily. "Not a soul must be admitted until then. One more sitting, you say, will be sufficient: so suppose we fix Monday week for the show day. Only, I warn you beforehand, prepare for an avalanche of compliments, for mamma is an excellent judge."

"Then she must have changed considerably since I first knew her," thought the artist, as with a pleasant nod of adieu Lady Anstruther tripped lightly out of the studio.

"A charming face," soliloquised Conway, standing in contemplation before the picture, "and very like what her mother's was. By the bye, I wonder what has become of that portrait I painted of her years ago, when she was Mrs. Mowbray. I have never set eyes on it since, but it must be somewhere about, and it would be interesting to compare the two."

After a somewhat protracted research among the mass of old canvases and other miscellaneous articles heaped together pell-mell in what he called his "lumber corner," he discovered the object of which he was in quest; and, wiping away the dust which had accumulated since it had been originally deposited there, placed it on an easel, and examined it attentively.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I was right after all. I remember I thought at the time that I had never done a better piece of work, and now I am sure of it. The colour is as fresh as if it had been laid on yesterday, and age has given it a mellowness of tone which improves it wonderfully. There will be plenty of time to have it varnished before Monday week; and when Lady Sandgate comes she will find a surprise in store for her; and perhaps, now that twenty years have passed over the head of the original since her last visit, be less inclined to disparage the copy."

The appointed day arrived, and with it the expected visitors, including of course Sir William, now for the first time permitted by his wife to admire the pictorial reproduction of her pretty self. The latter had some difficulty in persuading her mother, apprehensive of a chance allusion to her own abortive sittings, to be of the party. Conway's manner, however, was so perfectly unembarrassed, and his

recognition of her so courteously respectful, that Lady Sandgate soon felt quite at her ease, and, comfortably installed before her daughter's portrait, expounded her artistic theories and played the amateur critic to her heart's content.

While she and her happy son-in-law were still engaged in discussing the merits of the picture, Lady Anstruther, whom something had attracted at the other end of the room, suddenly gave a little scream of delight.

"Mamma," she cried, "do come and see what I have discovered! Oh, Mr. Conway, why did you not tell us of this? So beautiful and so very like!"

"What is it?" inquired her mother, rising reluctantly from her chair. "Nothing surely can be more beautiful than what we are admiring here."

"You won't say so when you have seen this," persisted Lady Anstruther, pointing excitedly to the handsomely-framed portrait of a young and lovely woman on an easel in front of which she was standing. "Look!"

At the first glance Lady Sandgate could hardly believe her eyes. Exactly facing her was her own image, as it had appeared twenty years ago in the radiant bloom of youth and the triumphant consciousness of beauty. In silence, but, as the flush on her cheek testified, with evident pride and pleasure, she gazed intently at the picture for a minute or two; then, turning to Conway, who was watching the effect produced on her by the experiment: "You have altered it, I perceive," she said, "as you intended doing; and I must congratulate you on the result, for I should scarcely have known it again."

"Pardon me, Lady Sandgate," he replied with a smile, "beyond a coat of varnish, the portrait is precisely the same as when you last saw it, and, if you remember, were not entirely satisfied with the resemblance."

"Is it possible? How could I have been so absurdly unjust! It is admirable and wonderfully like—what I was then, of course," she added hastily. "I shall prize it above everything, for I may consider it mine, may I not?"

The artist hesitated a moment before answering. "Why, to tell you the truth, Lady Sandgate," he said, "as you were not pleased with the likeness, I thought of effacing it, and of utilising the canvas for the portrait of the Russian ambassador, who is to sit to me next week."

"Effacing it!" she exclaimed, horror-struck at the idea; "not for worlds! The portrait is mine, and I insist——"

"Your ladyship's will is law," courteously interrupted Conway. "It shall be sent to Grosvenor Square to-morrow."

A proud and happy woman was Lady Sandgate when, her new

acquisition hung in the most advantageous light her ingenuity could suggest, awaited the admiring inspection of her friends at an afternoon reception improvised for the occasion. She had just dispatched a letter of compliments and thanks to Conway, accompanied by a cheque which more than repaid the artist for his previous disappointment; and although her too juvenile dress might perhaps have been more in accordance with her forty-four years, looked—all things considered—remarkably well.

"I was obliged to ask the Bergheim, Mildred," she said to her daughter before the other guests had arrived, "or I should never have heard the end of it. Besides, I rather want to put her out of conceit with that portrait of hers, which everybody must allow can't hold a candle to mine. But depend upon it if she *can* say anything spiteful, she certainly will."

Half-an-hour later the crush was at its height, and if Lady Sandgate had counted on the sympathetic enthusiasm of her visitors, she had no cause to complain. Conway's masterpiece afforded them an opportunity of "gushing," of which they availed themselves with touching unanimity; and if now and then certain ultra-complimentary allusions to the charms of their hostess savoured of questionable sincerity, it is possible that they were not the less grateful to her ear.

Every medal, however, has its reverse; and a discordant note was soon fated to disturb the general harmony. Lady Georgina, who had been one of the last to put in an appearance, after exchanging affectionate endearments with "darling Annie," had taken up her position in front of the picture, and was examining it patronisingly through her eye-glass.

"Very nice indeed," she said in a distinctly audible voice, "and a little—just a little—like what you were I forget how many years ago. But it is a sad pity that you didn't make up your mind sooner about taking it; because, you see, one can hardly help contrasting the past with the present, and that in *some* cases is rather trying. Don't you think so, Annie, dear?"

"Spiteful old cat!" murmured someone in the crowd; whilst Lady Sandgate admirably concealed her vexation, and warmly embraced "dear Georgie" on her departure from Grosvenor Square.

CHARLES HERVEY.

TO DORATHEA.

A Sketch.

By Katherine Carr.

"Sweet as the tender fragrance that survives
When martyred flowers breathe their little lives,
Is thy remembrance."

I.

"DON'T be so unsociable, Keith. She is not like other women; and I will guarantee that whatever else she may do, she won't bore you. As for making love to you, you are much too formidable for anyone to annoy you in that way against your will. Besides, what I really want to introduce you to her for is, that you may act as a kind of chaperon—Gooseberry—anything you like to call it, so long as it keeps an air of respectability over her."

"Oh, thank you. So I am to sacrifice myself to cover the follies of a gay and frivolous widow. In fact, to help her in her intrigues by assuming a sham air of elderly authority over her. I decline the office," I answered, winding up my tackle with an energy significative of some irritation of mind. "Are you in love with Mrs. Laurence yourself, Jack, that you want to set me as a watch-dog over her? She would not thank you for your officiousness."

"She doesn't care what I think or do," said Jack, looking rather sheepish. "There is no question of that sort of thing. But you see she is a kind of cousin of mine; and though, of course, she is not so young as she was, still she has a way that gets round a fellow in no time, whether he wants it to or not; and I don't want her to get talked about here. I wish she had never taken this place on the river. You may be pretty sure that fifty young fools, who have never thrown a line before in their lives, will come rushing down here mad on fishing. You are the only — er ——"

"Only elderly gentleman of hard heart and good reputation who happens to be on the spot," I put in. "Well, to oblige you, Jack, as you cannot stay yourself, I will think over it. But remember that it will be an act of unrivalled good-nature, for I heartily dislike the sight of a petticoat within a mile of the river. We came here to fish for trout, not to be angled after by women."

"Well, at all events, we need not exert ourselves any more this evening. I haven't had a rise for this last hour, and my inner man is clamouring for dinner."

"Dinner and Mrs. Laurence! I think you said you are going to dine with her? Deluded youth! No French chef can grill trout like my old friend at the inn; but no doubt you will get a sauce more to your liking. Come on then. I am ravenous as a wolf myself."

Our road lay along the river-bank. We were staying at that worthy and old-fashioned inn, the Blue Bell, well-known to frequenters of a certain delectable trout stream in one of our southern counties, and, as a rule, young Jack Miles and I ate our early dinner, and smoked our after-dinner pipes, in the easiest and least conventional of attires, and tried to forget that there were such feeble and over-rated inventions as dress coats, white neckties and patent leather pumps. But this last week I had received several hints to remind me that there was, after all, the difference of twenty years between us.

Twice Jack had left me to a solitary meal, and gone forth in the glory of high collars, and that studied negligence suitable to fashionable youth "on the river," to dine with a "distant cousin," a widowed Mrs. Laurence, who had taken a charming old house for the summer, not far from where we were staying.

So far I had managed not to make her acquaintance. Not that I affect any foolish prejudice against women in general; but I must own that I object to them when I am on a fishing expedition (for the matter of that, I consider them out of place at sport of any kind); and I am not particularly partial to frisky widows.

However, whether I liked it or not, I was destined to see Mrs. Laurence.

At the inn Jack found a note from her, saying that she expected us both to dinner, and apologising for not having asked me sooner, which she would have done had he spoken of me earlier.

"Very civil of her," I grumbled. "And I suppose I must return the civility by accepting the invitation. What a faithless brute you were to mention me to her, Jack."

Jack grinned, and seemed to think he had been very clever. But I was in too benignant a temper, after an excellent day's sport, to abuse him as much as he deserved; and when he told me that Mrs. Laurence positively objected to anything more fashionable than a loose and sober smoking-suit, my temporary annoyance began to be appeased.

As we walked towards Grassmere, Jack discoursed eloquently on the charms of his cousin; on her beauty, her talents, her superiority to other women. But he also delicately gave me to understand that, though he may once have wished to exceed the privileges assumed to be the right of cousins, she had cured him of such presumptuous folly, without in any degree rupturing their friendship, but, on the contrary, consolidating it into one which he evidently looked upon as having had a most beneficial influence over his life and character.

"She is very clever; there is no doubt about that," I commented. "Are you sure she is not too clever?"

"Only for her own happiness. I don't think clever women, as a rule, have such a good time as the stupid ones. It doesn't do to think too much in this world," said Jack, with sententious wisdom. "I can imagine it making a woman a bit of a cynic."

"So she is unhappy? That is very clever, too, Jack."

"No; she doesn't give one the idea of being unhappy. But you must wait and judge for yourself. I am not much of a hand at reading character. Ah! There she is at the garden-gate, watching for us. We are late."

"No one can be late here," called out a very clear and sweet voice, as though in answer to his last words. "In this weather one feels that Time was made for slaves."

She opened the gate, nodded to Jack, and shook hands with me with a few words of welcome that somehow made me think that it would be difficult to be long in her presence without thawing into friendliness. My first impression was that she was older than I had expected, that she had grey hair, that it was a little ridiculous to think that such a boy as Jack Miles had ever thought of falling in love with her. Her voice, however, was very young and soft, and her deep, quiet laugh, as she chatted with Jack, rang pleasantly on my ears.

I felt curious to study her face better. She kept it turned towards Jack, so that I could only see the delicate curve of cheek and throat and the creamy whiteness of her complexion.

"Had you good sport to-day?" she asked, still addressing Jack. "Of course you just lost the finest fish you have seen this year? You need not tell me that; it is the same old story with every angler I meet. The unattained is always seen through magnifying glasses."

"Arbuthnot does the reverse," said Jack. "You know, he goes in for being different from other people. With him it is always a case of sour grapes, and it is the minnow that breaks his line—not the three-pounder."

We had reached the house, and Mrs. Laurence paused a moment with her hand raised to push open the bay-window of the dining-room. For the first time she turned her eyes full upon me, and it struck me that there was a barely perceptible undercurrent of insinuation in her voice, when she answered carelessly:

"Perhaps Mr. Arbuthnot is right; we should all be wiser if we lived up to that. But come in. I really have a splendid fellow to give you to-night. Horace Langley caught it just below the willows at the end of my garden. You can imagine what a lengthy story he made out of it, and how enthralled I was by the recital."

"And how you laughed at him with the next person you met?" I suggested.

She gave me another quick glance, but hastily dropped her splendid eyes again.

"Yes; you are quite right," she said; adding to Jack: "Mr. Arbuthnot has already laid bare one of my faults. Did you give him a hint beforehand?"

"That you are a humbug?" answered Jack, with an easy familiarity that satisfied me no sentimentality lingered in his friendship with the beautiful cousin. "Not I. I left it to his penetration. He generally finds out one's little peculiarities fast enough."

"So I should have guessed. But that is not kind, unless he has the remedy to give as well. I will begin by not being a humbug, and by confessing that I have a great many faults, and that I know them."

"And do not mean to mend them," I added mentally; but only said aloud: "I would prefer to believe Jack, who says you have none." She shrugged her shoulders with a good-tempered smile. But there was an expression in her eyes when she gave me that one penetrating glance that was curiously defiant and antagonistic.

Yet it disarmed me instantaneously of any prejudices I had nourished against her, and even startled me into a very acute sense of fellowship and sympathy. It was like one of those inexplicable feelings that come over us now and then when we visit some fresh scene, meet some new acquaintance, or perform some trifling, unusual act—a feeling that it has all been the same before in a far-off time — so far off that the reminiscence is a mere flash, impossible to retain on our mental retina. In this case the flash was no less transient than usual; but it left behind it a feeling of interest, and for the first time I allowed myself a prolonged scrutiny of my hostess.

It was an interesting face; in early youth it must have been a very lovely one; and even now it preserved the imperishable beauty of pure and well-cut features. The eyes were of that rare almond shape—so seldom seen in Northerners—very soft, dark and liquid, and shaded by the thickest fringe of lashes I had ever—except once—seen before.

She did not look more than eight-and-thirty, but it was distinctly the face of a woman whose life had been something of a tragedy, and who had suffered long and silently.

My first idea, that she was a comparatively old woman, was probably suggested by the greyness of her thick hair, which was all the more striking from its contrast with her dark eyes and eyebrows, and which gave her a look of the marquises of old French pictures of a certain period.

Perhaps, on the whole, the chief characteristics of her beauty were its picturesqueness and its half-pathetic suggestiveness of sorrow, which always aroused a not unnatural interest and curiosity to know the true story of her life.

But there was no sign of the blighted or disappointed being in Mrs. Laurence's manner or conversation. Nothing could have been gayer or more charming than her banter with Jack, or more full of graceful tact than her efforts to make me feel at ease with them.

She seemed perfectly free from egotism, and chiefly anxious to make those around her comfortable, without caring a rush how

others were impressed by her own individuality. Probably it was this very sympathy that played such havoc amongst the young men. I could understand the attraction; and, at last, I even began to wonder if it was not also part of the attraction that underneath her friendliness lurked a little petulant defiance, as though she were privately thinking: "You are not sure of me; you try to judge me. But I care not a brass farthing for your good opinion, if you do not choose to give it."

But perhaps it was only towards myself she felt this antagonism.

After dinner we sat out in the garden. The night was bright and starry, and a pale, amber beam of light lit up the dimly blue river in front of us. We were rather silent. Jack lounged in a capacious chair, his eyelids drooping in a suspicious manner. At the Blue Bell he always fell asleep after dinner; but then at the Blue Bell it is our privilege to be as unceremonious as Hottentots. Mrs. Laurence, wrapped in a light-coloured shawl, lay back with indolent grace in her low seat, her slender white hands lying loosely on the arms of her chair. I had noticed before how white her hands were, and what nervous strength lay in the long fingers.

As for me, I was puffing lazily at my cigar, and doing a thing I did not often allow myself to do—recalling the past. I had transported myself over ten—fifteen—twenty years. I was a boy, like Jack, careful of my appearance, confident in my own knowledge of the world—young, self-conceited, happy. I cannot tell where I should have arrived if Mrs. Laurence had not roused me from my reverie by saying in her soft voice:

"This is almost like a night abroad. It is not often we have one so fine in England. It reminds me of Italy."

"How strange. That is where it had sent me," I answered. "Yet I have not been in Italy since I was a boy of twenty-six."

"You have never been there since? How unappreciative. You did not, then, like Miriam in "Transformation," go to the Fountain of Trevi and drink of its waters, that you might be forced to return within seven years? I thought everyone did that."

"So did I. But the spell was broken and I did not go back. I did not even wish to go."

"Perhaps you were not happy there?"

She was looking straight at me, and this time she did not turn away her eyes until mine fell a little abashed under their scrutiny.

She was certainly very clever. She could feign so great an interest in me, a stranger, that for one instant quite a youthful rush of confidence flew to my lips.

I paused before I replied. I was beginning to realise that my recollections of those long-past days in Italy were recalled, not so much by the calm, June evening, as by some vivid resemblance this woman bore to another woman whom I had known and loved twenty years ago. It made me feel as if she must, by instinct, have guessed

my commonplace little story, and that I might just as well answer truthfully as not.

"I was both happy and unhappy," I said. "Chiefly the former. It was, perhaps, the most perfectly happy time in my whole life."

"Ah," she said quickly, with a little gesture of sympathy; "that is always so. The unhappy days would never come unless they were preceded by a time of utter gladness."

"Yet one would not give up the unhappy days if one had to give with them the others. They are worth the price."

"No, no; I do not think so," she said, rising from her indolent attitude and clasping her hands together with sudden vehemence. "I cannot agree with you."

Then she sank back again with that low laugh that was so entirely free from care and feeling, and added, rather coldly, as though she wished to warn me not to encroach upon her friendliness: "After all, I am no judge. One must have known real unhappiness, I should imagine, before one can fully appreciate happiness. What I meant to say is, that I would rather not acquire the knowledge in so uncomfortable a way. I am content with my own placid enjoyment of life; the 'neutral excitement,' as some philosopher or other calls it, that does not worry one into a premature old age."

How like she was—strangely like! Yet the woman I had loved was, unto her, as an angel unto an ordinary mortal I thought, as I compared Mrs. Laurence's face, full of subtle knowledge of life, and showing traces of deep and passionate experience, with the almost spiritual innocence and purity of the girl I had known.

I did not believe Mrs. Laurence could ever have looked like Dorathea; and I was quite positive that Dorathea could never have grown into a woman who was so essentially worldly-wise as Mrs. Laurence, and who lived so entirely for the present moment, grasping at any pleasures that took her fancy, whether they agreed or not with her principles. Not that I thought her exactly wicked. How could I, after she had looked at me with that frank and half-pathetic gaze? But she struck me as being utterly indifferent to what the world said of her, capable of throwing herself with passionate recklessness into momentary excitements, and a little cruel to others by reason of her very gentleness. I did not for a moment believe her assertion that she had not been unhappy. I could see that she had suffered bitterly, intensely; and that in every thought and word there lingered some hidden trace of a struggle that had left its lasting influence over her life.

I did not argue out all this in a few moments. But I have some natural insight into character, and I seemed to divine this woman's mind with natural ease; at least so I flattered myself, though when I knew her better I found that I was not always perfectly accurate in my reckonings.

Jack still slumbered, or pretended to slumber; and though I, too,

was generally eager enough to turn in after a long day's fishing, I must confess that I began to wish he would sleep on, like a modern Rip van Winkle, provided I might pass the hundred years as pleasantly as I was passing that June evening.

It does not signify what we talked about. We drifted from subject to subject with the delightful inconsequence of sympathetic minds, that can follow one another's swift evolutions of thought without having to crawl laboriously over every inch of the way. It is the perfection of the art of conversation to be free to make short cuts from jest to earnest, from generals to particulars, from frivolity to philosophy, and to know that your companion is not left behind, plodding through a mist of confusion.

Mrs. Laurence had all the gifts of a charming conversationalist. She was clever and cultivated, full of penetration, and with an exquisite tact that seemed to bring everyone she talked to under the spell of her quiet sympathy.

It was all very well for me to remind myself that in all this she was the most finished coquette. It was not possible for her to hurt me, and I could safely allow myself to yield, just as far as I liked, to her undeniable fascination.

Every now and then, for a brief second I saw again so strongly the resemblance I have mentioned, that I could almost have imagined myself once more in Italy, young and ardent, listening to a certain voice, and looking into a certain pair of eyes that had wrought frightful havoc in my breast. At last I could not resist alluding to it.

"Do you know, Mrs. Laurence," I said suddenly, "you remind me strangely of someone I knew once, years ago, when I was a boy."

"Indeed! But is that so very strange? It seems to me that we are all pretty much like one another," she answered. "Is the likeness one of feature or manner, faults or virtues? Remember that I have already confessed myself full of faults, Mr. Arbuthnot."

"I don't think she had any faults," I said slowly. Then I added, what, no doubt, must have sounded very tactless: "She was like you in face and voice—curiously like."

Mrs. Laurence drew her shawl more closely round her throat, and rose from her chair, remarking that the evening was becoming chilly.

We strolled up and down the broad gravel pathway and were both rather silent. I was thinking over my last words. What in the name of wonder had induced me to so much as hint at a subject that for years had been the most hidden and sacred memory of my life, and that to an almost complete stranger? The balmy night air, aided possibly by Mrs. Laurence's excellent wine, must have made me maudlin and sentimental, a condition which, of all others, I most despised. If I chose in my secret soul to cherish a few sentimentalities, that was my own concern. But I had prided myself that no

other human being had ever guessed at their existence, and it irritated me to think that this provokingly attractive widow was searching out my weakness.

"The nightingales have left off singing. You should have heard them last week," said Mrs. Laurence, resting her arms on the garden gate, whilst I leant against the rail, trying not to look at her too much. "Jack used to get quite poetical about them when he had nothing else to say. They helped him to fill up gaps in the conversation."

"Is that what you are using them for now?" I asked. "Does it mean that you think it is time Jack and I went back to the Blue Bell?"

She laughed, and did not answer my question.

"I cannot say Jack has done much to fill up the gaps to-night."

"I don't think there were many gaps to fill; do you?"

"Not many. Yet Jack told me you were a silent person, and I was prepared to be rather awed. Do you know how he described you to me?"

"No. But I can guess. 'Rather a quiet fellow, but awfully good to me, you know;' or something of that sort."

"He said you were a person with a history, *you know*. At least, he thought you ought to be."

"Poor Jack! He never was more mistaken."

"Well, shall we go back and see if he is awake, and tell him so?"

But for a few moments she did not move, standing there like a beautiful statue, her eyes fixed very seriously on a faint streak of light on the horizon. Then she looked up at me.

"You say I remind you of someone," she said suddenly; "it has made me a little curious. Do you mind if I ask you what her name was?"

With that expression in her eyes, and in the half-darkness that hid the pallor of her cheeks and her grey hair, the likeness was so vivid that my heart throbbed. At that moment I could have told her anything she liked to ask me.

"Her name was Dorathea," I said. "She was eighteen—— and I was in love with her."

"Thank you," she said quietly. "Now shall we go back to Jack?"

Of course, before Jack left me next day I had promised to befriend Mrs. Laurence if she felt the slightest need of protection, which I doubted. She seemed thoroughly capable of looking after herself without interference, especially from a stranger like myself.

But it was impossible to resist her evident inclination to look upon me as a friend. Day after day I awoke with the firm resolve not to go in the direction of Grassmere, and day after day the resolution was broken. If she thought me a bore she concealed her feelings admirably, and though now and then I fancied I could per-

ceive that intangible defiance and antagonism that I had noticed the first time I saw her, as a general rule perfect sympathy seemed to exist between us. I did not attempt to fight against it; why should I? But it often struck me that she, too, was conscious of it, and tried at times to struggle against it, as if it placed us on too intimate a footing, or allowed me too clear an insight into her character.

Jack was right in his surmise. Troops of young men hovered round Grassmere, and Mrs. Laurence generally entertained a Saturday-to-Monday party. Her friends were not worthy of her, and if I could have had my way I would have avoided Grassmere altogether when they were there. But I remembered Jack's appeal, and (though I may have been a mistaken coxcomb for my pains) I gradually began to feel that I *was* something of a safeguard, a protection, and that Mrs. Laurence was grateful to me for my presence.

Yet how she delighted in provoking me, in raising distrust in my mind by her levity and would-be indifference to the world's opinion.

It cannot be denied that she was a coquette, and that she flirted cruelly with some of the poor moths who fluttered round her. It often disgusted and angered me into a fit of ill-humoured rudeness in which I did not attempt to disguise my contemptuous disappointment. And, oddly enough, I believe it was this uncalled-for candour that gave me my claim on her friendship, and made her regard me as a protection against her own recklessness.

It was easy to see that, under all her bravado, she was as miserable as she could be—despising herself, and sick to death of her independence.

It was only when she was alone, after her friends had left her, that she was her real self. It was my fortune to be with her during the re-action, and it was then that I saw the true woman, with all her worldliness and cynical hardness softened into a tired gentleness that was very pathetic to me. It was only at these times that she reminded me of Dorathea; at others I almost felt as if it were a disloyalty to that memory of purity and innocence to allow a comparison to be made between them.

Let no one imagine that my feelings for Mrs. Laurence were more than friendly. In the first place, remember that I was eight-and-forty; and, secondly, that once in my life I had been too madly and irretrievably in love ever to feel the passion again with any real warmth; and after having known the genuine thing I had no desire to put up with any counterfeit of it.

But, for the sake of her resemblance to Dorathea, I longed to be able to save Mrs. Laurence from herself. I used to wonder which of my friends would make her a good, wise husband; but none of them seemed suited to the situation, and most of them were not good enough for her.

Yet I did not think Mrs. Laurence particularly good herself. In

fact, she was an enigma to me, and when I tried to analyse my feelings and opinions in regard to her, I became so hopelessly confused that I soon gave up the attempt in despair.

"Confess that you do not understand me," she said one day. "One moment you have hopes of me; the next, I provoke you beyond endurance."

"On the contrary," I answered; "I am glad you do not show your better self to people who would not appreciate it. It would be casting pearls before swine."

"You have the rare merit of being honest. How have you managed to get it in a world like ours? I have discovered humbug to be the most useful weapon to carry one successfully through life."

She was looking defiantly at me through her eyelashes, and I could not help an uncomfortable conviction that she privately believed me to be the greatest of humbugs myself—one of those who trade on being honest.

"Each to his own liking," I said indifferently. "Humbug did not pay with me, so I took to honesty."

"Ah! I am relieved to know that you tried it once. I dislike people who have always been good. And, you know, you have got the rarest of reputations—that of being a good man. Were you always so good?"

I did not choose to answer. There was a tone of insinuation in her voice that vaguely accused me of insincerity in my whole life, and I certainly was not good enough to stand that.

There was quarrelling in the atmosphere. I had felt it once before in exactly the same way; and I could see by her face that it was her deliberate intention to make me angry. Dorathea had once looked like that, and I had never forgotten it.

"Won't you tell me what made you good?" Mrs. Laurence went on, with strange persistency. "I am interested. I really want to know."

I took one or two hasty turns up and down the room, then paused in front of her. If she had known how closely her question touched the dearest memories of my heart, she would have forgiven my perhaps unseemly agitation.

"Yes—I will tell you—if you will tell me what made you give up being good," I said passionately.

What a fool a man can be at eight-and-forty!

She turned very white, then flushed all over her face.

"It is only fair," she said quietly. "I accept your challenge."

II.

Two days passed before I saw Mrs. Laurence again. But on the third she sent me a note asking me to dinner, and by that time I had sufficiently recovered my temper to accept the invitation.

She received me quite naturally, without any restraint. Women always get over these little embarrassments more gracefully than we do; and there was no trace left of ill-feeling after we had been a few minutes together. She was as charming and entertaining as ever; by the time dinner was over, I was more convinced than before that she was an exceptionally clever woman.

I followed her out into the garden; and when we were comfortably settled on the little terrace overlooking the lawn and river, she turned to me with a very touching humility.

"I was very rude to you the other day. Will you forgive me?"

"It is for me to ask you that. A man of my age has no business to be hot-blooded," I answered. "You had the laugh on your side."

There was a short silence. Then she said, looking at me with sudden seriousness:

"Do you wish to keep the compact we made? I do not want to be inquisitive: but something you said the first night you came here has made me very curious. You always scoff at the idea of your life having been in any way interesting. I cannot believe it. I want—well, I want you to tell me about Dorathea, who was only eighteen—and so good."

For a moment there was a tremor in her voice; the next she laughed, as though ashamed of herself.

"You told me I reminded you of her, you remember? And the truth is, after putting two and two together, I have come to the conclusion that I must have known her and heard something of her history."

"You know her? Dorathea Rayner!" I exclaimed. "It never struck me ——"

"She was a relative of mine. I have always felt great interest in her, and wondered at one or two gaps in her story. We were always said to be alike; and it was that made me think of her when you spoke of my resemblance to an old friend of yours. Then in one way and another your name seemed to be familiar to me in connection with hers, and I began to feel curious. You see, I know you a little better than you know me, after all."

"How strange it seems! And yet why should it be? The world is a small place," I answered. "Will you tell me what her life is now? I have always wished ——"

"No," she interrupted. "First, you must keep your promise. Tell me your story. I think I am right in believing that it will also

in some measure be the story of Dorathea Rayner's girlhood. Afterwards, if you like, I will tell you her later story—what I know of it."

It was difficult for me to begin. I had never mentioned Dorathea to anyone. Yet a strange desire had come over me to confide my little reminiscence to this half-mysterious Mrs. Laurence. I felt sure of her sympathy; it was so deep, so genuine, that it seemed to cast a solemnity over us that was full of vague possibilities.

"Perhaps it will be painful to you?" she said, as I continued silent.

"It will be painful—yes. But it will also be a relief," I answered. "You must know, first of all, that she has been the guiding star of my life, and that her memory has been the talisman that has kept me from being quite such a brute as I might otherwise have been."

"You thought her so good?"

"I knew it. She was an angel. It has been something to hold on to through life, to know that there is at least *one* good woman upon earth. When I feel tempted to turn misanthrope and shut myself up in a tub, I remember that as it has been my luck to come across virtue once it must probably exist for other people too."

"I have had no such assurance of its existence," said Mrs. Laurence, with ill-concealed bitterness. "Perhaps that is why I am a cynic. But go on. It seems to me that you are trying to give me the moral before I have had the story. Begin. Where did you first meet Dorathea?"

"In Florence. I was staying with some relations of mine, the Erringtons, and she was a little orphan niece of Lady Errington's. Her parents had been Roman Catholics, and Dorathea was brought up and educated in a French convent. When I first saw her she was only seventeen, just emancipated from this convent; and she brought from it a little air of prim decorum that was decidedly attractive in anyone so young and pretty—a dear little 'pensive nun, devout and pure.'

"And she was adorably pretty! I was an egotistical youth of five-and-twenty, who affected superiority to such trivialities as female beauty, but I believe I fell head-over-ears in love with Dorathea the first moment I saw her.

"She was very shy at first, and I had to go through desperate manœuvres to make her lift her great demure eyes to mine. But before many days had passed I learnt how to raise a gleam of fun and mischief in those eyes that belied the demureness, and it was startling to hear what quick and sparkling repartees could come from the dear little mouth.

"In fact we soon discovered that no amount of conventual nipping and training had succeeded in crushing out of Dorathea a certain cleverness and originality that lent her all the greater charm, because she was as unconscious of it as she was of her beauty.

"Sometimes, when she became excited, she was seized by the wildest spirits; but they were always followed by a reaction of austere decorum, as though she had startled and shocked herself by a laxity that would have made the good Sisters she had just left open their eyes wide with horror.

"She was profoundly '*dévote*,' and full of religious scruples about the peril of worldly amusements. I can see her now, in her plain white gown, standing before me with her hands clasped behind her back, and her earnest eyes fixed on my face, as she spoke to me with the most intense fervour of the follies and illusions of the world and of the chaste joys of a life of sanctity.

"Of course I was ready enough to be lectured by her and encouraged her to the top of her bent; at first because it amused me and gave me an excuse for talking to her, and afterwards because her words did really begin to sow a certain amount of good seed in my heart.

"I do not think I was worse, morally, than most young men; and as it is now all a matter of the past, perhaps I may be allowed to do myself the justice to add that possibly I was a shade better than the generality of them. At all events, I had some sense of honour, and had the decency to be ashamed of myself when I failed to live up to my own views of right and wrong; and it seems to me that the young men of the present day—though I suppose they *have* some standard of right—pride themselves upon violating it.

"But there was one subject upon which Dorathea and I thoroughly disagreed.

"My ideal of a life of sanctity was the life of self-denial and work for humanity, and of activity in the world. Dorathea's was the life of prayer and meditation, shielded from temptation by the narrow walls of a convent.

"I cannot pretend that it was purely in defence of my theory that I used to wax so eloquent on the subject. With me, it meant a fight for what just then I considered the only thing in the world worth having, and without which I felt that my life would be incomplete—a failure—without aim or object. For Dorathea to shut herself up in a convent when she was one of the prettiest objects on the face of God's earth was little short of sacrilegious—a dead waste of sunshine and goodness in a world where neither sunshine nor goodness is conspicuous by its presence.

"I did not all at once confess to myself that I wished for a monopoly of this sunshine and goodness. The knowledge flashed upon me quite suddenly one day when we were together in the garden, whilst Dorathea filled a basket with roses to take to a little *protégée* of hers in the town.

"Her hair was always delightfully wild and untidy in spite of her well-meant efforts to plaster it into a correctly Madonna-like smoothness. And I remember just as she was stretching upon tiptoe to

reach a cluster of crimson roses, one turbulent lock of soft brown hair escaped from its bondage, and falling over her shoulder swept across my hand, which I had raised to help her with the refractory branch. At the contact a thrill of delight and sadness passed through me. As I thought of all this luxuriant hair being closely shorn to her pretty head, such a wave of regret and longing surged over me that I lost my self-control, and before I knew what I was doing, I had pressed the soft lock passionately to my lips, once, twice, six times over, like a frenzied Romeo.

"When I looked up, she was gazing at me with a blush like her red roses dyeing her cheeks, and in her eyes a childlike surprise that was slowly growing into a dim comprehension of what had never before struck either of us. Then she shook back her hair, pursed up her lips with a little air of shocked dignity, and walked straight back to the house, leaving me feeling as hot and foolish as a school-boy who has been caught stealing in his master's orchard.

"But from that day I had made up my mind that Dorathea was to be my wife, and that the machinations of every priest and nun in the whole Romish Church would not prevent it. Moreover, I determined that I myself, by love, persuasion and patience, would teach her that my theory of a life of active affection was, compared with her dead-alive conventual vegetation, as water unto wine, as sunlight unto the chilliest dawns.

"How we used to discuss that threadbare subject!

"You may think I was a terrible prig and fool. But remember that it was my only chance. I could not woo Dorathea with the stupid little commonplaces that are the sugar-like weapons of most love-making between a boy and girl. What I had to do first was to argue her out of all the convictions that had hitherto been held up to her as necessary to the salvation of a soul, and which were peculiarly adapted to the refined purity of her mind.

"But little by little I gained ground. She was very young, and easily influenced by those she cared for. Probably the appeals of one who was passionately in love with her carried more weight and were more directly impressive than the cut-and-dried maxims of a whole tribe of narrow-minded Sisters, who taught that all the warm impulses and innocent delights of youth are wily snares of Satan.

"Thus time went on. I had nothing to call me back to England, but a great deal to keep me in Florence, and the Erringtons were all in favour of my scheme. When they went to Switzerland in the summer they took me with them; and in our long mountain rambles Dorathea and I became more and more to each other. At least so I thought; though I daresay she felt nothing deeper for me than she would have felt for any other faithful slave who was always ready to do her bidding; it is more than possible that it was only my vanity and self-conceit that let me imagine that she looked up to me as a

guide and protector, not only over crags and along the edge of precipices, but in the wider affairs of life as well.

"If you want a man to be good, get some woman whom he likes and admires to trust him. Ten to one he will let himself be tortured rather than betray her trust; and if it happens to be a woman whom he not only likes and admires but worships with all the fervour of youth, there is nothing he is not capable of doing for her.

"The belief that Dorathea looked up to me, trusted me, and imagined me to be as good and pure as herself, fairly exalted me out of myself.

"The first part of that second winter in Florence passed like a dream, in which Dorathea and I alone existed.

"She no longer talked of going into a convent; or if she did it was without the old determination; and though she still sighed sometimes over the snares and dangers of the world, her latest ideal character was the one that meets and conquers temptation, not the coward who flees into a safe seclusion.

"That very winter Dorathea was introduced to some of those worldly follies she had talked about so glibly.

"I was with her at her first ball; and from that night dates the earliest token of the change that was coming over 'the spirit of my dream.'

"In the first place, I saw that I was not the only man who thought her beautiful; and I was unreasonably annoyed to see her dancing, full of the most light-hearted enjoyment, with a number of popinjays who were sure to tell her (what I had never told her) that she was one of those women who have a power in the world by their mere beauty and fascination, and that if she chose she could make a dozen more hearts palpitate as she had made mine.

"My dance with her came late in the evening; and after a turn or two I took her to a long picture gallery where we could sit and talk.

"She seemed to have undergone a change that made her if possible more beautiful than ever. She was flushed and her eyes were dancing with excitement. I was so astonished at the transformation in my saint-like little friend that I could find nothing to say to her.

"Was the world with its hollow pleasures going to steal her from me after all, now that I, myself, had led her away from the safe life of devotion and contemplation that she had loved? That would indeed be a mockery.

"'Dorathea,' I said suddenly; 'what do you think now of a convent life? You are trembling with excitement. You would never have done for a nun.'

"She did not answer for a minute or two, but I could see her face working with an emotion I had not meant to rouse by my words.

"When she raised her eyes to mine their expression startled me. It was as though she were imploring me to save her from herself.

"'That is just it,' she said hurriedly. 'Don't you understand that that is *why* I ought to have gone into a convent before the world gained too firm a hold on me? It is because I *love* the world that I ought to leave it.'

"'*You* love the world!' I cried incredulously; 'my little pensive nun?'

"'Yes. It is what I have always guessed. If you knew me properly, how you would hate and despise me. I am not good; far from it. Yet the greatest wish I have is to be good,' she said quite piteously; 'but when I feel like this—wild and merry and excited—what I care for most is admiration and gaiety and folly, and everything else, *everything* else seems dull and monotonous and insipid. You must save me, Keith.'

"'I? What can I do?' I asked sadly. 'I am not good enough.'

"'*You* not good enough!' she said, and gave me a look that at any other time would have made me ask then and there if she would be my wife, and teach me to be good enough for the best woman that ever was born.

"But now a sudden fear and distrust of myself kept me silent, and the opportunity was lost for ever.

"The next three weeks were weeks of purgatory to me. How adorable my little girl was to me cannot be expressed. She seemed to throw herself upon my protection, as though my superior wisdom could defend her from those new worldly pleasures which held such attraction for her. She no longer sought to conceal from me the temptations her beauty and charm were to her. Some women are born with the instinct in them of an antagonism to man that gives them an excellent excuse to break as many hearts as they can; and to tell the truth I do not blame them. If a man cannot defend himself it is his own fault, and he is fair game for a woman's arrows.

"But Dorathea was not, and never could have been, a flirt in the common meaning of the term. What she felt was simply a very natural delight in admiration and in the sense of power her beauty gave her; and her self-condemnation of what most girls would not have considered worth a thought was very characteristic of her moral purity.

"Why did I not propose to her, and let her settle my fate?

"Well, I suppose that would have been the most natural course to have taken, and I need not say that it is the one I should like to have followed. But I could not. Her very goodness prevented me. I could not forget the tone or the words of the little sentence that had escaped her the night of her first ball, where she told me of the effect worldly excitements had upon her.

"'*You* not good enough!'

"What was I that I should dare expect her to give herself to me? What was my past, compared with the spotless purity of hers?

Where would her trust and affection be after she had gradually learnt the coarseness and weakness of my lower nature, and seen the gulf of past folly and thoughtlessness that would divide me from her?

"Forgiveness, pity, tender toleration? Could I take these from her, knowing that they would be born of an anguish, a regret that would take from her life the things that made it most precious to her? It seemed to me impossible.

"I daresay other men who have been sincerely in love with a good woman have gone through the same doubt and struggles; and there would be a diversity of opinions as to whether I came to a right or to a wrong conclusion. But to me there seemed to be only one answer—that come what might, if I loved Dorathea I could not be the one to lower her ideal, and to show her that I, who had talked to her so grandly about virtue and a noble life, was made of but the poorest clay after all.

"Between me and her, now, there always hovered the haunting figure of a girl I had known at home. She was not a lady—had not the smallest pretension to being one—and I had only amused myself with her, as foolish boys will do when a handsome woman gets hold of them, be she vulgar or not. It was partly to avoid the unpleasantness of some little scandals that were getting abroad that I had first come to Florence; and during my friendship with Dorathea I had never given a thought to this girl. But now her image thrust itself between us, asking me with grim mockery, 'What right have *you* to ask Dorathea to share your soiled and wasted life?'

"Well, whether I acted rightly or wrongly I shall never know. Perhaps it was only a boy's morbid fancy, a form of moral cowardice that could not shake off and live down the mistakes of a thoughtless but not an intentionally evil past. At all events, it wrought a very momentous change in my life, making the whole of it an aimless void, without, as far as I can see, doing the slightest good to anyone.

"The crisis came soon enough. We were alone together in the garden. I remember Dorathea had just told me that she had received her first proposal of marriage at a ball the night before. She made the confession with as many blushes of shame as though she were alluding to a crime for which I had a right to punish her.

"'Of course I told him it was impossible, and now I am sorry that he ever thought of such a thing,' she said. 'But at the time I was not sorry—not a bit. I was rather frightened, but all the same I believe it pleased me. And the moment his back was turned I could do nothing but laugh. He *did* look so abject. Yet if I meet him again I *feel* that I shall treat him just as I did before. Oh, Keith, do you think my nature is very bad?'

"'Are the angels bad?' I said, with a mournful attempt at a smile. Then, losing my self-control, I cried out: 'Ah, Dorathea! What a weak, sordid brute you make a man feel.'

"'What is the matter? Are you unhappy? Has anything happened to you?' she exclaimed, frightened by my vehemence. 'Why do you speak like that to me? Let me help you, Keith, whatever it is.'

"'Listen, Dorathea,' I said gravely, making a desperate effort to be calm. 'I am only miserable because I am not worthy to touch your hand. You are as far above me as the angels in heaven. But I want you to remember one thing. Whatever happens, whatever my future brings to me, whatever temptations come in my way, I have dedicated my life to you—that is to Good.'

"'Not to me,' she said softly. 'To God.'

"I could not answer. I kissed her hands passionately; then tore myself away, my soul braced, as I believed, for any sacrifice for her sake.

"The next day I left Florence, and from that time to this I have neither seen nor heard of Dorathea Rayner. I know not whether she be living or dead, happy or unhappy in her lot. She has passed into a mere memory of Good, to which, as I said before, I have tried, to the best of my powers, to dedicate my life."

III.

When I finished speaking I suddenly awoke to the consciousness that my reminiscences had run away with me, and that I had been prosing on to myself rather than to my companion.

For more than twenty years this little story had been buried in the deepest recesses of my heart, unguessed at by my nearest friends; and this sudden unveiling of my secret brought to me a rush of half-forgotten memories—little words and looks, uneventful episodes that had had more meaning in them than at the time I had understood.

When I turned to Mrs. Laurence to see how she had received my spun-out confidences, I found that she was looking at me with flashing eyes.

"You left her, then?" she said.

"Yes. I left her."

"And after that?" she asked breathlessly.

"After that? Why, I married that other girl I have mentioned; was 'cut' by my family and friends, and sent to live abroad to hide what the world considered to be my disgrace. Oh, don't be afraid that I was not well punished for my freak of fancy," I said with an ironical laugh. "It banished me to more than ten years of life in the colonies."

"She lived so long? Pardon me—but I have heard that she did not make you very happy."

"We were unsuited, perhaps. Most husbands and wives are; I was not singular in that. People said I was a Don Quixote; and no doubt I deserved to get the worst of it in my tilt at windmills."

She did not answer. She was shading her face with one of her white hands, and from the stifled quickness of her breathing, I should have said had it been any other woman but Mrs. Laurence that my story had touched her even to tears.

Presently she dropped her hand and turned her face to me; in the dim light it struck me that she looked very worn and tired.

"I have wronged you grievously," she said. "Can you forgive me?"

Then, as I did not answer, she went on:

"And you say I remind you of Dorathea. Were we indeed so much alike?"

"Very like. Yet, as I told you once before, also very unlike."

"Ah—she was so young."

"She was only eighteen."

"Her hair was dark, I suppose, and her cheeks fresh and red as a peasant girl's."

"Her hair was nut-brown, and her cheeks the soft pink of a wild rose. She looked very young. I cannot imagine her being more than eighteen."

"She was innocent as a child. As you say, she looked as if age and experience and the prosaic troubles of life could never touch her; as if she must always be pure and innocent as when you knew her! Is that what you believe?"

"So I believed then; so I believe now. The belief in her goodness has been my talisman through years of bitterest trial."

"And if you saw her now—if you could hear the true story of her womanhood—should you feel no fear of a disillusion of your ideal?"

"None," I answered firmly. "There are some things that nothing evil can come near. Her purity was one of them. Sorrow may have touched her, but sin never."

I spoke with the utmost conviction. It would have been more than I could stand to hear that whatever slight efforts I had made to lead an honourable life had been for the sake of a chimera. Dorathea had been my religion; it would mean something more than a disillusion to find out after all these years that it had been a false religion.

"I have absolute faith in her," I repeated.

"We have all been Doratheas once," said Mrs. Laurence with a laugh that was meant to be cynical, but which only succeeded in being full of mournful bitterness. "We have all been Doratheas—even I."

With that she walked away from me down to the river, and stood there a long while lost in thought, her graceful figure throwing a long dark shadow over the moon-illumined water.

"We have all been Doratheas once—even I!"

I was beginning at last to understand. And I think at that moment our thoughts, though we were parted and silent, met together in the stillness, and were more eloquent than words.

When she came back to me there seemed to be a subtle change in her that smote down all the differences that had separated her from the Dorathea of my memories. She had cast aside her mask of hard cynicism and levity, and in her new self-abandonment was more *womanly* than I had ever seen her. In her face were traces of a deep and recent emotion, so apparent that I made a hasty exclamation of regret for having spoken as I had done.

But she stopped me with a smile.

"Yes, I have been flooding the river with effeminate tears. I do not deny it," she said softly. "I am not ashamed of it. I have not done such a thing for I know not how many years, and it has done me good."

"We have only kept half our compact," I suggested presently. "Is the other to be cancelled? Or will you tell me your story, now that you have heard mine?"

I was so overcome by the truth that had dawned upon me that I could not trust myself to speak in anything but a light and commonplace manner; even as it was my voice sounded foolishly abrupt and agitated.

"I will tell you Dorathea's story," she answered tremulously.

"Not if it hurts you."

"It will not take long. There is no chance that my memories of her will run away with me, as yours did with you. A very few words will tell you all you need know.

"When you left her—I think that is the place to begin—she was only a child, innocent of evil, and believing implicitly in—in *you* as the very type of everything that is good. You must have known that. And when the news came of your marriage, put in its worst light and condemned by everyone as something almost criminal, perhaps you can imagine what it meant to her. Deception, hypocrisy, a complete shattering of all her trust in human nature. Just now you said that if your faith in Dorathea had been destroyed it would have been the taking away your religion. I cannot explain better than that what your strange conduct was to her. It did literally destroy her religion, her innocence, her highest aspirations —— Oh, must I go on? Can you hear that she became worse and worse; yes, *bad* in thought and deed, utterly reckless as to what she made of her life, and at last the talk of Florence, as the wildest wife it was ever a man's misfortune to marry?"

She was half laughing, half crying.

I moved a little nearer to her, until my hand was close to hers on the arm of her chair.

"Don't go on," I said; "only tell me two things. She married, you say. Was she happy? Was he good to her?"

"Do not ask that," she whispered.

A little tremor run through her frame, and my hand closed gently over the soft white fingers that I had not held for more than twenty years.

"I shall never forgive myself," I said. "What have I not been answerable for? Oh, blind fool that I was."

How long we sat there, silent and motionless, I cannot tell. The moon waned behind a bank of gathering cloud, and there was not a sound to be heard except when now and then the night breeze rustled the slender leaves of the rushes on the river-bank.

I was only conscious that a hand lay, soft and warm, in mine, and that my soul and Dorathea's were speaking together as they had never spoken in those far-away boy-and-girl days, before they had tasted the whole bitterness of the cup of life.

It was Dorathea who broke the silence in a very low, scarcely audible voice.

"Have I stolen your religion from you?" she whispered.

"No," I said; and both my hands were tightly round hers now; "not if you will let me keep it; not if you will let me try to atone for the past; not if you will let the rest of my life be dedicated, heart and soul, *to Dorathea!*"

MIGNIONETTE.

MIGNIONETTE—mignionette
Is the fairest flower that grows,
And to me 'tis dearer yet
Than the lily or the rose.
When behind the dusky groves
Ruby red the sun has set,
'Tis to thee my fancy roves—
Mignionette, mignionette!

Like a kiss upon the air
Is the breathing of the briar,
And the roses, rich and rare,
Open wide their hearts of fire.
But they have no charm for me;
There's a flower that's dearer yet,
And my fancy flies to thee—
Mignionette, mignionette.

There are others passing fair,
But I hold thee first and best,
For thy quaint and quiet air
Breathes of love and peace and rest.
All my thoughts towards thee lean—
In my heart for aye thou'rt set
Oh, my charmer and my queen—
Mignionette, mignionette.

HELEN MARION BURNSIDE.

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The Argosy

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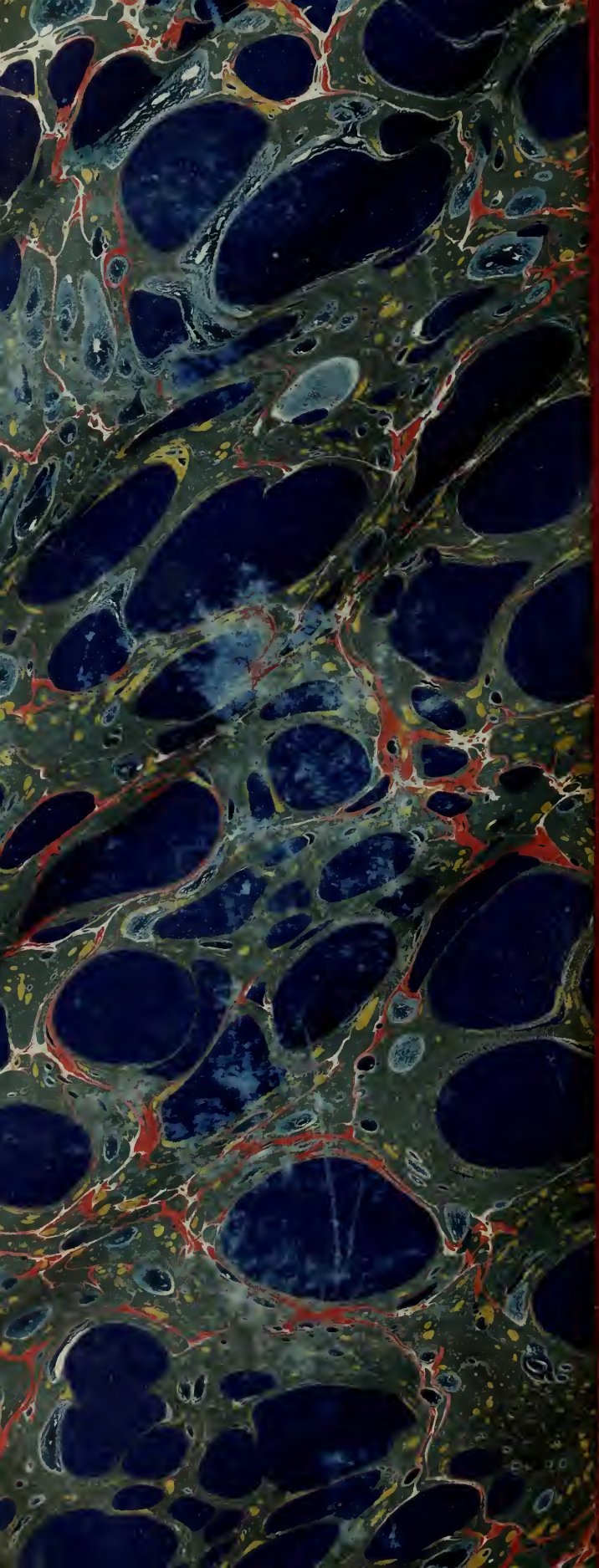
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